



# THE BANGLADESH TODAY

◆ UNITING PEOPLE EVERYDAY ◆

SATURDAY

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## INTERNATIONAL

France's Hollande urges Putin to look ahead, not back, over Ukraine

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## ENTERTAINMENT

Aishwarya Rai Bachchan launches Longines store in Mumbai

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## SPORT

Sarfraz 76\* steers Pakistan into 1-0 lead

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## Road to Victory

India recognizes BD  
Soviets veto UN  
ceasefire resolution

DHAKA : As the Mitra Bahini pushed ahead on several fronts, the Indian prime minister, Indira Gandhi, announced to the Lok Sabha that her government had decided to recognize "Gomoprotantri Bangladesh". It was December 6, 1971, reports BSS.

As the Indian foreign minister, Swaran Singh told the US Ambassador, Keating, on that day, India to allay criticisms about its possible "annexation" of territory had recognized the government. "Henceforth, they would be the sole authority to decide what they wanted to do with the sizable territory that the Mitra Bahini had liberated", Singh said.

The Indian foreign minister also said that to avoid any administrative vacuum the government of India felt that a "duly constituted authority" of the 167 elected members of parliament of East Bengal be recognized.

Meanwhile in New York, the UN Security Council met and discussed the affairs of Bangladesh and two proposals that did not have a reference to the elected representatives of East Bengal and the release of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib was vetoed by the Soviet Union. The Soviets proposed that the cease-fire resolution incorporate those.

> (Contd. on page-11)

## Online registration for hajj-goers from Dec 15-Jan 30

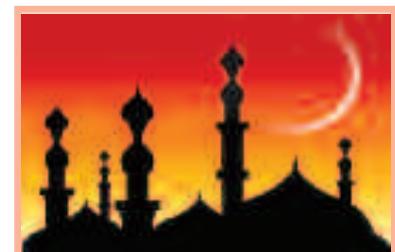
DHAKA : Bangladeshi Muslim devotees intending to perform hajj next year will have to register their names online from December 15 to January 30, according to a government decision, reports UNB.

The decision came from an inter-ministerial meeting chaired by Religious Affairs Minister Principal Matur Rahman on November 26, deputy secretary (Haji) of the ministry Jahangir Alam told UNB.

"The Saudi government in a letter has requested us to complete the registration of the Hajj pilgrims by January 21-22, 2015," Alam said addressing that the request was discussed at the inter-ministerial meeting on hajj management on November 26 and it was decided that hajj registration will take place from December 15 this year to January 30.

The secretary also said the Saudi government every year fixes a quota for Bangladeshi hajj pilgrims but, according to a new agreement, every registered pilgrim can go for hajj from the next year.

An agreement will be signed in the first week of February, 2015, as per the Saudi government's directive, while the registration of hajj pilgrims will begin in the last week of February.



## Namaz Timings

### Today

	Start	Jamaat
Fajr	05:09 AM	05:45 AM
Zohr	11:55 PM	01:15 PM
Asr	03:35 PM	04:15 PM
Magrib	05:14 PM	05:17 PM
Esha	06:37 PM	07:30 PM
Tahajjud	After midnight	

Source: Islamic Foundation

SUNSET : 05:11 PM  
SUNRISE : 06:27 AM

## US tried to stop January 5 elections : PM



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing a press conference at Ganabhaban yesterday. Photo: Banglar Chokh

DHAKA : Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Friday said the USA had tried its best to stop the January 5 election in Bangladesh, which was inevitable to continue democracy and constitutional rule, reports UNB.

"They (USA) tried their best to make sure that this election (January 5) could not take place," she said. The Prime Minister made the observation, responding to a question regarding the recent visit of US assistant secretary of state Nisha Biswal and her comments on Bangladesh, at a press briefing held at her official residence Ganabhaban to inform about her recent Nepal and Malaysia visit.

She went to Nepal on November 25 to attend the 18th SAARC summit and to Malaysia on a bilateral visit. Hasina said the citizens of the country would have to remember one thing: that is this country is independent and sovereign. "And we want to march forward with dignity."

In this connection, she criticized the attitude of some people of the country that Bangladesh could not move forward without the US

blessings', The Prime Minister said: "This is not correct that we'll live if a particular country remains beside us, and we will die without them, I know very well many of you hold such opinion, but it is

not correct." She mentioned that during the Liberation War in 1971, the US government was against the independence of Bangladesh and they moved their 7th Fleet towards Bangladesh to help the Pakistani occupation forces.

"But we gained our independence at that time. We can also move forward as the independent country right now."

Describing America's move against

Bangladesh in the recent times, she said that the World Bank president without taking consent from its Board had cancelled the funding of the Padma Bridge. "We heard that it was done as per the directives of the then US Secretary of State (Hillary Clinton)."

Hasina also said that Padma Bridge is very much important for the economy of the country.

> (Contd. on page-11)



BNP leader Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia addressing a discussion meeting at National Press Club on Friday. Photo: Banglar Chokh

## Fall scare made govt cynical of conspiracy, says BNP

DHAKA : Hitting out at the ruling party leaders for accusing BNP chairperson of conspiring at her Gulshan office with government officials, BNP spokesman Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on Friday said Awami League leaders now finds conspiracy in everything as it suffers from the nightmare of its fall, reports UNB.

"The ruling party sees conspiracy in everything as it suffers from a nightmare as they're now afraid of fall anytime. They know it very well they're standing on quicksand losing earth beneath their feet. Their throne will fall like the house of cards in the face of turbulent wave of people," he said.

Fakhrul, the BNP acting secretary general, was addressing a discussion at the Jatiya Press Club arranged by the party marking 'Democracy Free Day', commemorating military ruler HM Ershad's bowing out in the face of a mass upheaval on December 6, 1990.

Earlier in the Day, Food Minister Quamrul Islam termed BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia's meeting with some 'government officials' on Thursday night as a 'midnight blueprint' and said necessary actions will be taken against those involved in the 'conspiracy' against the government.

BNP claimed some retired government officials met BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia at her office on Thursday night as per her regular contact with people from all walks of life.

However, the government based on the reports of indigence agencies alleged that some 20 retired and serving bureaucrats held a meeting with Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office on Thursday night to conspire against it.

## Biman looks for financer to have delivery of 4 Dreamliner aircraft

DHAKA : In an effort to have the delivery of four 787-8 aircraft by February 2020, cash-strapped Biman Bangladesh Airlines looks for a financer for the pre-delivery payment (PDP) as a term loan for the aircraft, worth USD 136.280 million (US\$ 136,280,280), reports UNB.

The four 787-8 aircraft, popularly known as Dreamliner, are scheduled to be delivered by October 2019, November 2019, January 2020 and February 2020 respectively, according to sources at Biman, the national flag carrier.

As per the terms of agreement, the PDP for the four 787-8 aircraft are to be made in a number of installments starting 54 months prior to the delivery of each aircraft.

The first installment of the first 787-8 will start in April next year, for the second aircraft it will start in May next year, for the third it is from July next year while August for the last aircraft.

Biman has floated a tender in this regard recently with the closing date fixed at January 11 next year.

According to the tender document, the first aircraft will cost USD 33,914,050, while the second USD 33,992,350, the third USD 34,148,950 and the last one USD 34,224,930.

## Dhaka, Thimphu to renew bilateral trade deal

PM due Saturday

DHAKA : Aiming to give their relations a stronger footing, Bangladesh and Bhutan will renew their bilateral trade agreement on Saturday with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Bhutanese counterpart Tshering Tobgay witnessing the signing ceremony, reports UNB.

The Bhutanese Prime Minister arrives here on a three-day official visit on Saturday morning, exactly the day when Bhutan recognised Bangladesh as an independent state in 1971.

This is going to be Tobgay's first visit to Bangladesh since he assumed office in July 2013.

The Bhutanese Prime Minister will be accompanied by his Foreign Minister Rinzin Dorji, Minister for Economic Affairs Norbu Wangchuk and other senior officials, in addition to a business delegation.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will receive her Bhutanese counterpart at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at about 9am, said an official.

He will later meet Sheikh Hasina at the Prime Minister's Office at 5:10pm and hold bilateral talks on a wide range of issues relating to bilateral relations and other matters of common interest.

Cooperation in the areas of electricity, connectivity, trade between the two countries, water resources management and culture are likely to be discussed at the meeting. Before the bilateral talks, they will have a tete-a-tete from 3:15, according to sources at the PMO.

Bhutanese Ambassador in Dhaka Pema Choden said they are taking the visit with special significance and mentioned that it is the reaffirmation of very strong and friendly bonds between the two countries. "We're looking for renewing the bilateral trade agreement between the two countries," she told UNB.

Talking to the news agency, Additional Commerce Secretary (FTA) Manoj Kumar Roy said the agreement will be renewed for five years normally but extension might be there in the future.

He said Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed and his Bhutanese counterpart Norbu Wangchuk are scheduled to sign the renewal of the deal for their respective sides on Saturday. Both the Prime Ministers will witness the signing ceremony at the PMO.

The agreement will provide a 'greater impetus' to the existing trade and commercial relations between Bangladesh and Bhutan.

## BD can generate energy without fuel: Expert

DHAKA : Bangladesh has huge potentials to generate energy without any fuel using a new technology, 'Heavy Circular Moving Object's Triggering Energy Conversion' (HECMOTE), said a leading scientist, reports UNB.

"This is a very new technology. This doesn't require any fuel. It's a big thing," prominent scientist Prof Dr M Shamsher Ali told UNB on Friday.

Prof Ali, also former Vice Chancellor of Bangladesh Open University (BOU) and ex-President of Bangladesh Science Academy, said proper funding can help scale up the initiative generating over 100 megawatt electricity from a plant.

"It needs funding. In the long run, it will be important in the country's interest," said the scientist, also the chief adviser of HECMOTe Technology.

Kazi Abdus Samad Masud, communication officer of HECMOTe Technology,

> (Contd. on page-11)



## BCB lifts NOC ban on Shakib

SPORTS REPORTER

The BCB has ended the restriction on no objection certificates being issued to Bangladesh allrounder Shakib Al Hasan, leaving him free to participate in overseas tournaments, the board president Nazmul Hassan has said.

On July 7, Shakib was banned for six months and told he would not be granted NOCs to play in overseas competitions until December 31, 2015. He was punished for "serious misbehaviour" with the Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusingha and an altercation with a spectator during an ODI against India in Mirpur.

The BCB later reduced his ban by three half months on August 26, letting him play for Bangladesh from September 15. On Tuesday, Hassan had said in an impromptu press briefing that the restriction would be lifted within a couple of days, and Shakib will be available to play in the Big Bash League from December 18.

Hassan said Shakib's improvement in behaviour had been noticed by the board and that he had shown "leadership qualities. "We are not against our players," Hassan said. "However, there are times when situations demand strict measures. The ban and NOC embargo on Shakib was a message to everyone that we will not compromise with discipline."

## Suranjit for forming a probe body for Khaleda-bureaucrats talks



Suranjit Sengupta

Suranjit Sengupta, a senior parliamentarian of the ruling Awami League, said this while speaking as the chief guest at a discussion on current politics in the city. Bangabandhu



Sungkyunkwan University of Korea representatives- Dr. Ji-Beom Yoo and Dr. Jaichan Lee on Friday paying a courtesy call to Dhaka University VC Prof. AAMS Arefin Siddique at the VC office of University of Dhaka.



Prof Latifa Akanda

## DU Prof. Latifa Akanda is no more

Habibur Rahman Ovi  
DU Correspondent

Latifa Akanda, a former professor of Dhaka University, died following a short illness at Birdem Hospital, Dhaka yesterday at the age of 89.

The body of the professor was taken to Dhaka University Jam-e-Mosque premises after the Jumma prayer where people of all walks of life paid their last tributes to her. After paying tributes on behalf of the university, DU Vice-Chancellor Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique described the demise as an irreparable loss for the nation.

She was a professor at the department of Islamic History and Culture at Dhaka University. Besides the chairpersonship of Democracy Watch she was one of the founders of Women for Women, she was also associated with other NGOs, including Unity for Social and Human Action.

Born on November 01, 1925 in Netrokona, she studied at Lady Brabourne College, Calcutta later at SOAS, London University on Modern Indian History.

She started her career as a teacher at Eden Girls College. Wife of Zaminuddin Akanda, a scientist and metallurgist, she left behind three sons and a daughter.

## Central BNP leaders incur grassroots' wrath in Kurigram

KURIGRAM : Some central leaders of BNP incurred the wrath of a group of local BNP men here on Friday over the expired committee of the party's district unit, reports UNB.

Several thousands BNP leaders and activists, led by district unit senior vice-president Abu Bakar Siddique and former general secretary Omar Faruk, intercepted BNP joint secretary general M Shahjahan, organising secretary Asadul Habib Dul and joint general secretary of Sweekhasebab Dal Prof Aminul Islam at Zero Point in the district town in the morning demanding the cancellation of the expired committee. Angry BNP men kept the road blocked for an hour, barring their leaders, who came to the district on an organisational tour, to move forward. Later, they withdrew the blockade when Shahjahan assured them of revolving the issue. Party sources said the biennial conference of the district BNP was last held on February 28, 2009.

## Expat's house robbed of Tk30 lakh worth valuables in Sylhet

SYLHET : Robbers looted valuables worth Tk30 lakh from the house of a Saudi expatriate at Palpur village in Chhatak upazila of Sunamganj district early Thursday, reports UNB.

Sources said a gang of robbers, numbering 10/12, swooped on the house of Liton Mia, a Saudi expatriate, breaking open the lock of the main gate and kept the house inmates hostage at gunpoint in the dead of night.

## Ensure justice to violence against women: CJ

DHAKA : Chief Justice Muzammel Hossain on Friday urged all concerned to be more cautious and responsible so that the women who fall victims to violence get justice, reports UNB.

He made the call while addressing the inaugural session of a workshop at a city hotel as the chief guest.

International Women Judges' Association and Bangladesh Women Judges' Association jointly organised the workshop, 'Family and sexual violence victims' rights to justice'.

Observing that violence against women is a global phenomenon, the Chief Justice said only law is not enough to curb this menace. "All must be responsible and conscious, too."

He also underscored the need for ensuring education, empowerment and employment for women to bring an end to violence against them. "All -- from the family to

society and state -- must be mindful about it." Muzammel Hossain observed that there will be a marked decline in violence against women if the media increasingly run anti-discrimination reports.

Speaking on the occasion, the country's first female justice, Nazmul Ara Sultana, currently an Appellate Division Judge of the Supreme Court, identified poverty as a barrier to justice for women although the constitution safeguards equal rights of both men and women.

She also said a violence-victim woman has to face harassment everywhere, including police stations. Nazmul Ara noted that the persons concerned have no training as to how a sexually-harassed victim should be interrogated, saying court can play a greater role in meting out justice to such victims.

## Road crashes kill two in Magura, M'singh

DHAKA : Two people were killed and 20 others injured in separate road accidents in Magura and Mymensingh districts on Friday, reports UNB.

In Magura, a microbus driver was killed and 10 other people were injured when a truck rammed into his vehicle at Jagla Bazar on the Magura-Jessore Road in Sadar upazila on Friday.

The deceased was identified as Nurul Islam, 45, a resident of Rajbari district.

Jahangir Alam, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said the accident occurred when a truck hit a microbus as its driver lost control over the steering due to blurred visibility caused by dense fog around 8.00am, leaving the microbus driver killed on the spot and 10 other people injured. The injured were rushed to Sadar Hospital.

Away in Mymensingh, a man was killed and 10 other people were injured when a bus and a truck plunged into a ditch following a head-on collision on the Mymensingh-Kishoreganj highway at Nandail intersection on Friday.

The deceased was identified as Sabuj of Melandha upazila in Jamalpur district.

Ayubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Nandail Police Station, said the accident took place in the area round 6:45 am when a bus of 'Himel-Ayesha Paribahan' service from Chittagong collided head-on with a truck coming from the opposite direction and both the vehicles plunged into a roadside ditch, leaving 11 people injured.

Of the injured, three were rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where doctors declared Sabuj dead.

## 2-week solo cartoon exhibition begins in city

DHAKA : The first solo caricature exhibition of artist Nasreen Sultana Mitu, titled 'Meet the Faces', began in La Galerie of the Alliance Française de Dhaka on Friday, reports UNB.

Eminent cultural personality Ahsan Habib, Editor of Unnati, and sculptor Ferdousi Priyoshwini were among the guests present at the opening ceremony. Bruno Plasse, Director, Alliance Française de Dhaka, welcomed the guests and also presided over the opening ceremony.

Nasreen Sultana Mitu has been drawing cartoon and caricatures professionally since 2006.

She began cartooning in UNMAD magazine under the direct supervision of the legendary cartoonist, editor and publisher of Uumad magazine Ahsan Habib. Mitu now works as an assistant editor for the same magazine. The exhibition will remain open to all until December 18.

## Tobacco: a silent but visible killer

DHAKA : In Bangladesh, at least 57 thousand people die every year from eight tobacco related diseases. The rate of tobacco use in Bangladesh is highest in the world. More than 43 per cent of the adult consume tobacco in any form, reports UNB.

According to the World Health Organisation and Bangladesh Government survey, about 3,000 crore taka go down the drain for smoking bidi (low cost tobacco) per year.

Experts say, women and children are most affected by tobacco consumption.

Terming Bangladesh as the biggest tobacco consuming country, experts said, thousands of people here are suffering from lung cancer, cerebrovascular, coronary artery, chronic obstructive pulmonary and other tobacco caused diseases. For treatment of tobacco- disease affected persons (patients), the nation spends over Taka 51 billion annually. Shops and point of sales with luxurious decoration matching colour of particular cigarette packs are seen in the city to attract consumers and make new customers of tobacco. The shops have well-designed display showcases with colourful

lighting.

Such decorative shops and point of sales matching cigarette pack colours are new promotional tactics of tobacco companies. Tobacco companies are constantly changing their promotional tactics as most countries have banned all forms of tobacco advertisement, sponsorships and promotion, anti-tobacco campaigners told BSS.

They said companies spend huge amount of money for decoration of shops and points of sale to draw attention of customers aiming to promote their business. This ill tactics of tobacco companies should be stopped. Visiting different areas in Dhaka city, this correspondent found that shops and point of sales were designed and decorated matching color of cigarette packets of a foreign tobacco companies. Tobacco companies are running promotional campaign adopting different methods ignoring the tobacco control law.

The government has amended the Smoking and Using of Tobacco Products (control) Act, 2005 by incorporating strong provisions removing loopholes that were in the

law. As per the amended tobacco control law, any person found carrying out promotional campaign on tobacco and tobacco products will face three months jail term or a fine (maximum) of Taka one lakh or both the punishments. In case of repeating the violation of law, punishment will be doubled. Citing different provisions of the amended tobacco control law, Project Coordinator of Work for Better Bangladesh (WBB) Aminul Islam Sujan said any forms of advertisement have been prohibited at point of sales in the law. But tobacco companies are frequently violating this law.

As per the tobacco law, all forms of tobacco advertising, promotional activities and sponsorship by tobacco companies are banned. The anti-tobacco campaigners termed the promotional campaign at the sales points a clear violation of tobacco control law. The amended tobacco control law prohibited all kinds of promotional activities at the points of sales and other places, they added. But tobacco companies are running their business giving a damn to the law, the anti-tobacco activists added.



Martyr's intellectual monument at Mirpur is being cleaned for the upcoming Martyred Intellectuals Memorial day to be held on 14 December 2014.

## ASL leader Probal Roy passes away

DHAKA : Awami Svechchasebok League (ASL) deputy office secretary Probal Roy died of cardiac arrest on Thursday night at a city clinic, said a press release yesterday. He was 43.

He left behind his mother, wife, a son, a daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death. The body of Probal Roy has taken to his native village at Moichail under Chandina Upazila in Comilla district for cremation.

Earlier, the coffin containing the body of Probal Roy was taken to the ASL central office at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city for the convenience of party leaders, workers.

## Diseases break out with early cold in Khulna Hospitals see influx of child patients

KHULNA : Early season cold is playing havoc with public health in Khulna amid outbreak of different types of disease when the winter has just set in. The situation has kept worsening day by day with the weather getting colder, reports UNB.

Different cold-related diseases have broken out in the district in just a few days since the onset of winter sending a staggering number of people to the hospitals for treatment. And among the affected are mostly children. A large influx of child patients has been witnessed in the local hospitals in the last one week.

Crowds of children inflicted with cold-related diseases are increasing in the city's public and private hospitals and clinics, including Shishu Hospital, every day.

During recent visit to some government-run and private hospitals, this correspondent found that the numbers of patients attacked with cold-related diseases were increasing day by day.

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Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu inaugurated the sugarcane crushing program at Mobarakganj Sugar Mills Limited under Kaliganj upazila in Jhenidah on Friday.  
Photo : S I Mallick

## Sugarcane crushing program inaugurated in Jhenidah

S I Mallick, Jhenidah Correspondent :

Mobarakganj Sugar Mills Limited under Kaliganj upazila in Jhenidah, the only state-owned sugar mill in the south-western part of the country, started its from Friday.

Industries Minister Amir Hossain Amu inaugurated the sugarcane crushing programme. This season, the sugarcane crushing at the mill will continue for 120 days, and the sugar

production target is set at 9,750 tonnes, said officials.

Speaking on the occasion, the Industries Minister said the government is moving ahead with a policy to appoint more workers in the state-owned industries and reopen closed factories. Managing director of the Mobarakganj Sugar Mills Delwar Hossain said

some 13,300 tonnes of sugar from the previous crushing season still

remain unsold at the mill's godowns. At the programme, workers' union leader Mashiur Rahman said their wages are two months in arrears.

Among others Anwarul Azim Anar MP, deputy commissioner of the district M Shafiqul Islam and Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC) chairman Mahmud-ul-Haque Bhuiyan were also present at the occasion.

## View exchange meeting on improvement of slums in Faridpur

FARIDPUR : A day-long view exchange meeting on improvement of the life style of the slum dwellers organized jointly by Practical Action, Bangladesh and Society for the Urban Poor (SUP) was held yesterday at local Ambica Memorial hall, reports BSS.

The object of the meeting was to find out ways and means and also to strengthen the cooperation between concerned government agencies and NGOs who are working on different fields in the slum areas.

The meeting was chaired by SUP chairperson Asma Akhtar Mukta who is also Executive Director of local NGO Racine.

Two power point presentations were made in the meeting displaying the modus operandi of work going on in

twenty thirteen slums of this town. It was disclosed that fourteen local NGOs aided by Practical Action funded by UK-AID and European Union have been working in these slums in cooperation with Faridpur Pourashava.

It was told in the meeting that urbanization is growing at a first pace in Bangladesh. About 26 percent people now live in urban areas with increasing poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion. These people have very limited access to basic services, decent employment security. They face economic, political and social exclusion which makes them difficult to reach.

The population growth is further fueled by migration by rural people due to natural disasters, employment and livelihood opportunities and the

internal dynamics of towns and cities.

Speakers opined that the situation prevailing in the slums must be changed with strong coordination of government agencies and NGOs. Speakers also stressed the need for implementing Integrated Urban Development Projects for bringing a positive change in the life of the slum people.

Among others, Anowar Hossain, Coordinator of Practical Action, Educationist Professor Md. Shahjahan, General Secretary of SUP Fazlul Hadi Sabir, Acting Mayor of Faridpur Pourashava Anisur Rahman Chowdhury, Pourashava Councillor Nafizul Islam Taposh, Acting DD of Social Service department AKM Ahsan spoke in the meeting.

## Money laundering major obstacle towards socioeconomic development: Governor

RAJSHAHI : Governor of Bangladesh Bank Dr Atiur Rahman has categorically said money laundering is one of the major obstacles towards socioeconomic development of the country in the present context, reports BSS.

Terming the money laundering and financing of terrorism as grievous crimes he asked the regional bankers to prevent those in strong hand to eradicate the gradually escalating threats to the country caused by the financial crimes.

Governor Atiur Rahman defined that

various criminal activities including smuggling, trafficking of drugs, terrorism and militancy are operated through money laundering besides illegal transactions. He made these observations while addressing a regional bankers' conference styled "Anti Money Laundering and Combating Financing of Terrorism" held at Nanking Darbar Hall in Rajshahi city Thursday evening.

Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit ((BFIU) of Bangladesh Bank organized the conference with the main focus of

disseminating updated knowledge and strategies to prevent malpractices associated with money laundering.

Around 100 senior bankers and others concerned from both public and private banks attended the conference.

Managing Director of Al Arafah Islami Bank Limited Habibur Rahman and Managing Director of Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank (RAKUB) Monjur Ahmed spoke as special guests while Jinnatul Bakiya, Executive Director of Bangladesh Bank, welcomed the participants.



Municipal councilor of Barlekha upazila Md Shahjahan recently received General Osmani memorial award on behalf of Shopnopuri Foundation for his outstanding contribution in social service. Justice Md. Momtaz Uddin awarded him as the special guest on the occasion.  
Photo : Abdur Rob

## Road crash kills 1 in Bagerhat

Nihar Ranjan Saha,  
Bagerhat Correspondent :

A man was killed in a road accident at Srighat area on the Bagherhat-Khulna Highway under Sadar upazila of the district on Friday.

The deceased was identified as Sheikh Rafiqul Islam (35), son of Soleman Sheikh of Srighat village.

ASI of Bagerhat police station Md Ajet Ali said that the accident occurred when a Khulna bound bus hit Rafiq in the area while he was crossing the road leaving him critically injured. Locals then took him to the Bagerhat Sadar Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

## Road crash kills student in Demra

Md Harun-Ur-Rashid,  
Demra Correspondent :

A college student was killed and another injured in a road mishap in the capital's Demra area on Friday morning.

The deceased was identified as Fazle Rabbi (16), a student of Rokeya Ahsan College in the capital.

Police said, the motorcycle which Rabbi was driving, lost control and hit a truck near Al Amin road around 10:30am, leaving him dead on the spot and another injured.

Injured Tanjin was admitted to a local clinic.

## Transport strike isolates Comilla

Md Mizanur Rahman,  
Comilla Correspondent :

Communications by road between Comilla and 20 South-Eastern routes snapped as the transport workers went on a strike on Friday.

Bus movement from the city to Feni, Noakhali, Laxmipur, Chandpur and Chittagong remained halted following the workers' strike, causing immense sufferings to the passengers.

Transport workers waged the movement, demanding the punishment of "extortionists," who attacked the leaders and workers at the city's Paduar Bazar area on Thursday.

A gang of extortionists attacked the president and the general secretary of the organisation in presence of Sadar (South) police station Officer-in-Charge Prashanta Paul.

The angry workers put barricade on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway near Alekh Char area of Comilla on Thursday evening, protesting the attack.

They also demanded withdrawal of Sadar Dakkhin OC.

Besides, the union leaders also threatened to extend their strike all over the district if their demands are not met by Friday.

## Bishnu statue found in Munshiganj

MUNSHIGANJ : A

touch stone statue of Lord Bishnu, weighing about four maunds, was seized by police from Dakkhin Kazi Kasba village under Sadar upazila on Thursday, reports BSS.

The statue was found when a group of workers were cutting earth at an arable land of one Kazi Nur Jamal of Dakkhin Kazi Kasba village.

On information, a team of police of Munshiganj Sadar upazila rushed to the scene and seized the precious statue.

## IPM increases crop output, improves environment: experts

RANGPUR : Experts at the inaugural ceremony of a Farmers' Field School (FFS) have stressed for adoption of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) method that increases crop output at reduced costs improving environment, reports BSS.

They were addressing the ceremony arranged in village Faridabad under Betdighee union of Fulabri upazila in Dinajpur on Thursday by World Vision Bangladesh (WVB) under its Fulbari Area Development Programme (ADP) to inaugurate the FSS.

With inauguration of this FSS in village Faridabad, farmers of Aladipur, Eluari, Kazihal and Betdighee unions under Fulbari upazila have been getting now necessary services and information on agriculture from four FFSs set up in these unions by WVB.

The NGO has set up these FFSs in these unions to increase crop production at reduced costs and make agriculture more profitable through popularising adoption of IPM among the farmers also to improve environment, ecology and bio-diversity.

With Agriculture Officer of Fulbari ADP of the NGO Arbindu Roy in the chair, Fulbari

Upazila Agriculture Officer S M Nasim Hossain attended the ceremony as the chief guest and formally inaugurated the FFS and its activities in the area.

Programme Officer of Fulabri ADP of WVB Badal Sangma and its Officer-in-Charge for Kazihal union Dr Gyanottar Chakma attended the ceremony as the special guests.

More than 100 small and marginal farmers, including females, from different villages under Betdighee union of Fulbari upazila in Dinajpur district attended the ceremony.

The speakers urged the farmers for expanded adoption of the IPM and integrated crop management methods to increase more hygienic crop production at reduced costs using natural ways and organic fertilisers avoiding use of chemicals and pesticides.

The chief guest said the FFSs could be the main sources of agricultural information and latest technologies for the farmers to achieve more benefits by them through enhancing crop output to improve their livelihoods and ensure food security.

## 'Clean campus and Safe Campus' campaign in COU

Md. Mayen Uddin Elahi, CoU Correspondent :

The Bangladesh Chakra League of Comilla University (CoU) launched 'Clean campus and Safe Campus' campaign to craft the university site dirt free and secure on Thursday.

The speakers said that, the curriculum is not basically a curriculum to rejoice, however to get attentiveness amid the students to continue the campus precise, dirt free as well as secure from the aggression, nuisance with bombing every time. The activists of Chakra League resolve not only to clean the campus surroundings but also to free the evil-power from the campus as well as on or behind the country. Furthermore, they will speed up the progress trial of the administration via enchanting such kind of scheme" avowed Vice-chancellor of Comilla University.



The Bangladesh Chakra League of Comilla University (CoU) launched 'Clean campus and Safe Campus' campaign to craft the university site dirt free and secure on Thursday.

## Jessore as first district liberated from occupied forces

JESSORE : On December 6, 1971, the green-red flag was hoisted marking the symbol of victory as Jessore being the first district was liberated from the clutch of Pakistani occupation forces, reports BSS.

That was a day when the mother of a boy, Ayub Ali of Mashshampur in Chougaicha in the district, turned her shock into strength. The Pakistani butchers gunned down the boy only for chanting "Joy Bangla", leaving his mother to shed only tears silently until the day she first enjoyed freedom in liberated Jessore.

Besides, the union leaders also threatened to extend their strike all over the district if their demands are not met by Friday.

They also demanded withdrawal of Sadar Dakkhin OC.

Besides, the union leaders also threatened to extend their strike all over the district if their demands are not met by Friday.

women took army training to fight the Pakistani army to achieve their ultimate victory.

On March 26, the Pakistan army picked up Mashru Rahman, Member of the National Assembly, from his residence, took him to the cantonment and brutally killed him there.

On March 30, Bangali soldiers at Jessore cantonment revolted under the leadership of Captain Hafiz, and engaged in a fierce fight, in which many Bangali soldiers including Lieutenant Anwar embraced martyrdom.

107 brigade of the Pakistani Army took the command of Jessore cantonment under Brigadier Hayat Khan to control six districts. However, Jessore was under sector 8 during the War of Liberation with Major Manjur being the sector commander. Meanwhile, on March 31, a rally of thousands of people from Narail district moved to Jessore town and with the help of locals attacked Jessore Central Jail to free all prisoners.

In July, the War of Liberation got a lift when the trained Freedom Fighters started to ambush the positions of Pakistani army in the areas.

On November 20, the Freedom Fighters along with the Indian force captured Jessore cantonment and also encircled the Chougaicha base of Pakistani Army, the strongest base in the western zone. Later, on November 22, the Chougaicha base was captured by the joint forces after a heavy fighting.

## Imperative: A befitting response to rising terror activities

It should be only appropriate to say that normal life and living of people in Bangladesh and the overall security of the country in all respects face a grave challenge from rising attempts at terroristic activities. It seems that not a day passes without terrorists, mainly of the so called Islamist variety, dominating media headlines. Recently, we heard about acting Al-Qaeda supreme leader declaring his intention of making Bangladesh a major staging area for his organization. Besides, other Islamist terrorist groups, specially the JMB, which were earlier considered as subdued forces, are now transparently seen to be reviving with considerable strength. Recently terrorists have been nabbed who confessed that their aim was to kill liberals, intellectuals and secularist politicians such as our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The train of recent events proved that the terror groups have found neighbouring India like a safe haven and staging area from where to conduct their operations inside Bangladesh and then to retreat. Needless to say, these are worrisome developments. Although they declare they are distinct Islamist groups, in reality their outlook and aspirations are the same: to establish a Taliban type of regime in Bangladesh.

The law enforcement bodies have done commendable works in responding to these acts of terror. But they have not gone far enough in identifying completely the networks of terror and in smashing them very effectively. Thus, the agents of terror remain still strong and secure in their hideouts in large number. They are working to disrupt on a large scale the organs of the state or the functioning of its government. Thus, it should be obvious why a very befitting response to the terror must be organized because at stake is the country's well being, the health of its economy and peace and happiness of its people.

It would be imprudent to think that the terrorists are home grown squads supplied and inspired by entirely local sources. Whatever could be known about their modus operandi, their abilities in making explosive devices and financial abilities to be able to smoothly rear their networks, all suggest a degree of expertise and evil professionalism which are unlikely to be found naturally or usually among the country's underground operators. Prominently foreign hands are working behind the wings to destabilise the country. The local terrorists are probably only their bogeyman. Knowing the mission objective of the conspirators is very important. Why do they seek an unstable Bangladesh? Are the acts of terrorism designed to pulverize Bangladeshi into accepting the notion that it cannot govern itself?

Perhaps the main aim of the plotters is to create schisms, to engineer misunderstandings and suspicions between different sections of people to create civil unrest through their activities. Thus, it is so very important to frustrate this aim and for this the contending groups in the country will have to shelve their conflicting aspirations for the time being and present a united front against terrorism in the higher national interest.

Specially, the two main political forces in the country - the Awami League and the BNP - need to come together in a minimum understanding to jointly cope with the terrorism related developments. National unity - truly expressed and resolved - will isolate the evil doers and make it easier to detect them and weed them out. A people united in their stand and determination to stand up to the terrorists can be a more powerful factor than policing or other law enforcement activities. The main political parties must jointly appeal to the people to find out the perpetrators of terrors. They must be identified and dealt with as per the law regardless of their political connections.

## Moral responsibility: Israel's empty words

As'ad Abdul Rahman

Tel Aviv's shift towards the religious far right is manifesting itself in extreme abhorrence of anything pertaining to peaceful co-existence with Palestinians.

In the midst of the brutal Israeli carnage, which mostly targeted civilians in Gaza, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared that the army of Israel was "an army that strictly follows a very high standard of moral conduct and absolutely has no intention of harming any innocent human being".

Such empty words could not hide facts on the ground, with the world watching on TV stations the horrendous blood-drenched images of the war. Nor could Netanyahu hide that his army vented its revenge upon women and children in frustration over its failure to face Palestinian fighters on the ground in Gaza. The immoral conduct of the Israeli army in the battlefield of Gaza, and its impotent attempts "to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat" were also witnessed by the whole world for 51 days. A clear hint of Israel's moral defeat came from one of its soldiers, Yuli Novak, a former air force officer who wrote in the *Guardian* that "Israeli military pilots no longer care about anything while dropping hundreds of tonnes of bombs on the heads of civilians in Gaza. In the past, the Israeli army tried to follow a moral conduct, but it is no longer the case anymore. And the past Israeli popular opposition to the army bombing civilian homes in Gaza has vanished now along with the red lines of a strict moral conduct."

In *Haaretz*, Amira Hass sarcastically wrote that "If victory is measured by the number of Palestinians killed, then the mighty Israeli army has attained a great victory by killing 2,170 and wounding and maiming 20,000 Palestinians of whom 80 per cent were mere civilians." She said "All [such] victories are leading to our moral downfall which is really a moral defeat of a society that failed to meet a high moral standard in its conduct and we shall be haunted for years to come by our moral defeat."

A great number of articles, especially in Britain and the US severely criticised the Israeli military conduct in the war against Gaza. The abhorrence of the western news media reached its apex when little Palestinian children playing football in front of a hotel on the shore of Gaza filled with western journalists were instantly turned into shards of charcoal by Israeli rockets consisting of unconventional explosives barred by international law. The *Guardian* wrote saying that "wars kill people including teachers in their classes, nurses in their hospitals and farmers in their fields, but when children become a target to be terminated by rockets, it becomes the lowest inhumane and immoral conduct ever committed". The *Daily Telegraph* said "the so-called international community is no more than a bunch of silly actors competing against each other while Gaza is being consumed by tons of explosives".

**The Gulf News**

## A Depression-Fighting Strategy That Could Go Viral

TINA ROSENBERG

When Ebola ends, the people who have suffered, who have lost loved ones, will need many things. They will need ways to rebuild their livelihoods. They will need a functioning health system, which can ensure that future outbreaks do not become catastrophes. And they will need mental health care.

Depression is the most important thief of productive life for women around the world, and the second-most important for men. We sometimes imagine it is a first-world problem, but depression is just as widespread, if not more so, in poor countries, where there is a good deal more to be depressed about. And it is more debilitating, as a vast majority of sufferers have no safety net.

Health care for all must include mental health care. It's hard to believe but both Liberia and Sierra Leone have only a single psychiatrist. The Ebola crisis has exposed these countries' malignant neglect of their health systems. People can't get care for diarrhea and malaria. How will these countries take care of an epidemic of depression?

This isn't really a medical question. We know how to treat depression. What we don't know yet is how to make effective

treatment cheap, culturally appropriate, convenient and non-stigmatizing - all needed to get treatment out to millions and millions of people. But some researchers are finding out.

They are doing so despite the fact that growing attention to this issue hasn't been accompanied by money. The U.S. National Institute of Mental Health last year provided just \$24.5 million for global mental health efforts, and the Canadian government's Grand Challenges Canada, which is said to have the largest portfolio of mental health innovation in developing countries, has spent only \$28 million on them since it began in 2010.

Two years ago, I wrote about a research study in 2002 that provided group interpersonal therapy, led by college students and high school graduates with two weeks' training, to depressed women in Ugandan villages. The treatment was so effective that six months after starting this therapy, only 6 percent of those treated still had major depression.

More recently, similar work has gone on in South Asia. In rural Rawalpindi, Pakistan, the Thinking Healthy Program taught basic cognitive behavioral therapy for only two days to female community

health workers with a high school education. The trainees, called Lady Health Workers, then integrated the therapy into their regular visits with pregnant women and new mothers. (Studies often focus on women, especially new mothers, because they suffer depression more than men and their mental health is crucial to their children's development. It allows health workers to paint the program - truthfully - as a way to help the baby, which is more socially acceptable than treating depression in the mother.) Six months later, only 3 percent of those treated were still depressed. The largest study was in Goa, India, where local people with no health background were given an eight-week course in interpersonal psychotherapy and worked with physicians to treat patients with mental health disorders. This, too, was very successful.

These studies were proof that depression could be treated in poor countries by lay people. Now these researchers are trying to figure out how to streamline these interventions to the minimum outlay of resources needed to maintain excellent results. Many models are being tried, which integrate mental health care into

primary care, employ community health workers or piggyback therapy on to other kinds of services. But one very promising strategy is to rely on peers as therapists. "The idea is to really make it go viral," said Vikram Patel, a psychiatrist at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the leader of the Goa study.

In Rawalpindi and Goa, researchers are shifting the Thinking Healthy Program from community health workers to minimally trained peers. These projects are part of the South Asia hub of a major project financed by the N.I.M.H. to support and link global research on delivering mental health care in poor countries. The study is in its early days - results won't come out for several years.

In both places, mental health professionals are recruiting and training local women with levels of education similar to those of the depressed mothers they will work with. The training is only a few days in the classroom and a few days in the field. Most of their work will be one-on-one, although in Pakistan the peers will bring patients to some groups.

*The New York Times*

## George Osborne is a debt addict - and so is the entire Western world

FRASER NELSON

George Osborne has perfected the art of preaching sobriety while knocking back the tequila slammers. No one, now, does it better. "I have a plan to reduce the deficit," he said yesterday, "I'm not going slower" - bold words for a man who is this year borrowing more than double what he first planned. Labour's plan is "higher borrowing", he said - in a way that might make you think his involves lower borrowing. In fact, he aims to increase debt by another £200 billion but thinks he'll get away with it. And he's probably right.

Not many Budgets or Autumn Statements will make it into the history books but this one deserves to. It marks the end of an era, the moment when the Tories learnt to stop worrying and love the debt. Or, at least, fear it less. The focus, ahead of the election, is on more spending: money for new motorways in swing seats, a billion or two for the health service, a reduction in children's air fares. Every penny will be paid for by more debt - as Nick Clegg used to say, a credit card bill run up by adults then passed to children.

But no one in government uses such metaphors any more. The big change - which has affected everything, and will impact our lives more than any single Budget measure - is the new era of cheap, almost free, money. A global crash in interest rates is flooding the West with credit, allowing debt addicts like the British Government to borrow at bargain basement rates. What first looked like a bizarre blip of low rates could be here to stay, causing nothing short of an economic revolution. All this will affect

our lives more than anything announced in the Autumn Statement. Like all of the most important economic changes, it's not being announced. But you can find hints of it in speeches made nowadays by the authors of Britain's economic policy. Andrew Haldane, the chief economist of the Bank of England, said recently that it's wrong to see today's rock-bottom mortgage rates as a freak event caused by the crash. It's part of a worldwide trend dating back decades. Savers in Asia are desperate for somewhere safe to store their money. It's normally safest to lend to governments, so a sea of cash comes flooding to people like Osborne. He can now borrow more cheaply than any chancellor in history. So crazy has it all become that cash is being lent at below the rate of inflation - so, in effect, people are actually paid to borrow. It's like a worried Chinese investor giving you £1,000, as long you promise to pay back £950 - a tempting offer. And such offers could be with us for a generation. As Haldane said a few weeks ago: "Real interest rates are now expected to remain negative for at least the next 40 years." If this extraordinary state of affairs comes to pass, it will upset everything we have come to know (and teach our children) about saving, borrowing and the basic financial architecture of life.

Take bank accounts, for example. Once,

above the rate of inflation. So the only choice savers have is how quickly they want to lose money. Since the crash, the average cash Isa has yielded a real return of minus 12 per cent. Some unkink souls in the banking world now describe Isas as a tax on stupidity. It's more like a tax on hope: anyone with a cash ISA will be banking that, some day soon, rates will return to normal and the wind will fill the sails of savings accounts again. But what if the Bank of England is right, and this never happens? The ones doing well from savings will be those who know how equity markets work. It's a generational shift: those brought up on the maxim of "neither a borrower nor a lender be" now have to tutor their children in the art of speculation: how to borrow and invest. Hard work and thrift is no longer the surest road to prosperity. After Osborne's statement, the *Spectator* gave its now-traditional presentation for our readers and clients of Aberdeen Asset Management. I noticed several parents with children in the audience, an odd sight in a financial seminar. But it makes sense: when bank savings don't work any more, teenagers need to know how to work markets. Mothers are dragging their teenage daughters to soirees about gilt yields so they can better manage the portfolios they will undoubtedly inherit. This can sound so dull, but the effects are profound. A gulf is opening between the world of income, and the world of capital - a new split with huge consequences. Inheritance will start to matter more, and marrying into money will become a far bigger issue (already there are dating

apps that say they exclude "poor people"). In general, it is becoming harder for a bright child from a poor background to work their way up. Since the war, the average worker has been able to afford a decent house deposit after about four years of saving. Now it's 10 years. This fuels a sense of anger and despair. For those who already have houses, great years lie ahead. Low rates mean rising asset prices and Osborne's Autumn Statement predicts a 30 per cent rise in property prices by the end of the decade - pushing housing further out of reach for ordinary buyers. The Treasury fully intends to cash in on this asset boom. The small print from the Budget shows it expects a 70 per cent rise in stamp duty revenue (in spite of the cut in rates) and 65 per cent rise from inheritance tax - as more estates are pushed over its threshold. The strange thing is that households are not bingeing on debt, even if personal loans are cheaper. Individuals have learnt from the crash, even if governments have not. Before the election, the Tories ran a television advert featuring a newborn baby saying it had "Dad's nose, Mum's eyes - and Gordon Brown's debt". The advert blamed "Labour's debt crisis" for every child in Britain being born owing £17,000. Quite right, but a baby born now would owe about £25,000. We can safely expect no more talk from ministers about indebted babies. The Tories have adopted Labour's more philosophical approach about debt, because low rates mean they can afford to.

*- The Telegraph*

## Iran and the US are now best of enemies

DAVID BLAIR

The two have common cause in wanting to defeat Daesh - but they are by no means allies yet. Venturing into airspace patrolled by the US military used to be a perilous business for Iranian pilots. Back in 1988, an American destroyer mistook an Iranian civilian aircraft for a warplane and blew the airliner out of the sky, killing 290 innocent people. Did that precedent cross the minds of the crew of the Iranian F-4 Phantom as they took off to bomb Daesh (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) positions in Iraq last Sunday?

If so, they need not have worried. The pilot and navigator might have been in danger from surface-to-air missiles fired by Daesh - or even from mechanical failure, given that their Phantom is an antiquated model, which first flew in 1958. But America, with the world's mightiest air force, clearly had no interest in doing them any harm.

The Iranian air strikes, which probably involved a second Phantom, would have been tracked on the radar screens at Al Udeid airbase in Qatar. This military hub outside Doha serves as the headquarters of America's offensive against Daesh. At any given time, serried ranks of B1 bombers and Globemaster transport aircraft can be seen beside Al Udeid's runway. If American commanders had wanted to destroy Iran's brace of Phantoms, they could have done so with a fraction of the power at their

disposal. Yet, they allowed Iran to go ahead and strike Daesh unmolested. In the process, America demonstrated the eternal relevance of the old dictum that "my enemy's enemy is my friend". As a Sunni zealot, Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, the leader of Daesh, considers Iran's Shiite regime to be despicable infidels, every bit as loathsome as America and the West. Suddenly, Baghdadi has managed to give America and Iran a common cause: Both have a vital interest in ensuring his defeat.

The immediate consequence is that American spokesmen have tied themselves in knots to describe their country's new position. Officially, Washington will not "coordinate" the military campaign with Iran. Does turning a blind eye to Iranian air strikes amount to "co-ordination"? Absolutely not, according to Rear Admiral John Kirby, the Pentagon spokesman. Asked about the raids, he confirmed that Iranian Phantoms had indeed been in action in Iraq, before adding: "Nothing has changed about our policy of not coordinating military activity with the Iranians." Meanwhile, Iranian officials flatly denied that their air force had struck Daesh at all. This makes no sense, given that a Phantom was filmed in the act of bombing targets in Iraq on November 30 - and no other country in the Middle East possesses the same fighter save Turkey, which has played no part in the anti-Daesh campaign. Moreover, the air strikes

took place in Diyala province, which covers the approaches to Baghdad and shares a border with Iran, making it exactly the sort of place that Tehran would be anxious to defend. So the verdict is clear: Iran dropped the bombs - and America let them do so. Given that Daesh poses a threat to just about everybody and Iran clearly has legitimate security interests to protect, are there any reasons to be wary?

Many of America's most powerful Arab allies would answer with an emphatic "yes". Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states nurse a visceral suspicion of Iran. America duly kept them in the dark last year when US diplomats held secret meetings with their Iranian counterparts. Those talks eventually produced an interim agreement to constrain Iran's nuclear programme. Since then, America and Iran have stopped bothering to hide the frequency of their contacts. In the past 12 months, John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, has held dozens of meetings with Mohammad Javad Zarif, the Iranian Foreign Minister. In theory, the two men have been solely focused on settling the confrontation over the nuclear programme - and a final deal remains elusive. But no one doubts that they have discussed other subjects as well. Privately, diplomats from the Gulf fear that the rapprochement between America and Iran has gone much further in secret than either side has

acknowledged in public. The fact that Washington is, at the very least, prepared to tolerate Iranian air strikes in Iraq will be taken as further evidence of this theory. But you do not have to believe that Iran has covertly become an American ally to be wary of any cooperation with Tehran against Daesh. After all, Iran's ruinous interventions in Iraq and Syria helped to create the conditions for Daesh's rise. In Baghdad, Iran backed the nakedly sectarian policies of Nouri Al Maliki, the former prime minister. The Revolutionary Guard armed the very Shiite militias that alienated Iraq's Sunni minority and drove some into the Daesh camp. In Syria, Iran has done more than any other outside power to sponsor Bashar Al Assad's war against his people. The onslaught against Syria's Sunni majority has been the galvanising force behind Daesh. With every sectarian atrocity, Al Assad deliberately sought to radicalise his foes in order to ensure that even he would appear more palatable than those who were trying to bring him down. As he trod the murderous path that ended in Daesh's ascendancy, Iran was alongside him every step of the way. So if Iran now seems part of the cure, never forget that it helped to incubate the disease. On balance, America was right to let those Phantoms bomb Daesh - but those who do not make Iran an ally.

*- The Telegraph*

## The Hunger Games are real in Gaza

I could have never imagined myself drawing parallels between my refugee camp, Nuseirat, in the Gaza Strip, its heroic people, and a Hollywood movie; the struggle of my people is too sacred for that. But I couldn't help it as I watched the latest from The Hunger Games franchise, Mockingjay.

A feeling of anger initially overwhelmed me when I saw the districts destroyed by the heartless rulers of the Capitol. As I watched the movie, not only resistance of Palestine, but particularly that of Gaza, was on my mind.

The Capitol - with unmatched military technology and access to an enormous media apparatus - was unstoppable in its brutality. Its rulers, who claimed to have superiority over all the inhabitants of the dystopia of Panem, had no moral boundaries whatsoever.

The Hunger Games, the story's version of a reality television show, was created as an annual event to celebrate the victory of the Capitol over a previous revolt by the districts. It also served as a reminder of what the Capitol was capable of, if anyone dared to rise up again in the future.

The show's participants - all children who were chosen

or volunteered in a process called the "reaping" - came from every district. The contestants had to kill one another for the amusement of the Capitol, which drew its strength from the division and oppression of others.

from the Capitol's insistence that resistance is futile. Panem's ruthless president was adamant at referring to those who defied the Capitol as "radicals," and not "rebels." At times, the Capitol tried to turn the

bombers destroyed a hospital full of unarmed men, women and children, killing everyone: "I want to tell the people that if you think for one second the Capitol will treat us fairly if there's a ceasefire, you're

rehabilitation center in the strip for thousands of victims of previous Israeli atrocities.

Her message to the Capitol: "You can torture us and bomb us and burn our districts to the ground, but

2006: "The idea is to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger." This was not a passing statement.

After much legal wrangling, an Israeli human rights group, Gisha, managed to obtain documents which showed that since then Israel has enacted a "deliberate policy of near-starvation" in Gaza and that "security" had nothing to do with the Gaza blockade.

Does Collins know that Katniss, who didn't choose such a fate but had to step up in defense of her people, is represented in thousands of men, women, and yes, children of Gaza?

Does she know that her stories were already written and enacted by real people, who may never have heard of her franchise and may never live to watch her movies? Does she know that criminal leaders such as President Snow are not something of fantasy, but they actually exist, here today in the persons of Benjamin Netanyahu and countless other Israeli leaders who call for the absolute annihilation of Gazans at a whim?

As for Gaza's Hunger Games, the similarities are uncanny. Just before Israel imposed severe economic sanctions on Gaza, to punish Palestinians for the result of their democratic elections, top Israeli government adviser Dov Weisglass made a spine-chilling promise in

Not even the chilling words of Moshe Feiglin, deputy speaker of the Israeli parliament (Knesset) were enough to intimidate Gaza. In his Facebook plan to destroy the resistance on August 1, 2014, Feiglin called for the "conquest of the entire Gaza Strip, and annihilation of all fighting forces and their supporters". He then went on to call for all its remaining inhabitants to be pushed into concentration camps near the Sinai desert.

"In these areas, tent encampments will be established, until relevant emigration destinations are determined," Feiglin wrote.

Feiglin, and his prime minister, Netanyahu - among many others in Israel's political and military establishment - are real life leaders of the Capitol, which is allowed to operate with complete impunity against the oppressed districts of Palestine. And like the Mockingjay, which was resurrected against great odds, Gaza will remain the rebellious district. The blood of its "near-starved" children will someday unite all districts against the Capitol. Then, all the voices that doubted the wisdom of the resistance will be diminished by the loud, but harmonious chanting of a united people.



## Obama keeps pivot credible, for now

United States President Barack Obama had a better than expected visit to Asia for the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), East Asia Summit (EAS), and Group of 20 gatherings, due largely to a productive summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping. At the end of his trip in Brisbane, Obama gave his second major speech on the US rebalancing policy to Asia, coming almost three years to the day after an address to the Australian parliament on his previous visit to that country.

A side-by-side reading of President Obama's two major Australian speeches on the subject (he has yet to give a major policy speech on the rebalance in the United States) provides a useful benchmark for assessing the administration's progress in implementing the policy. I found the following takeaways from my reading of the two speeches:

"The fundamental goals of the rebalance to Asia have remained consistent, focusing around the goals of shared security, shared prosperity, and commitments to advancing universal human rights in Asia."

The Obama administration can justifiably point to progress in deepening alliances with Japan, Australia, South Korea, and the Philippines and strengthened partnerships with Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, and India, but fallout from a coup d'état has taken Thailand out of the mix (and out of Obama's Brisbane speech). Modernization of US military forces in Asia has made slow and steady progress.

"The Obama administration's rhetorical commitment to energizing institutions such as the East Asia Summit as vehicles for applying international norms to regulate regional behavior remains constant.

The United States has reiterated the importance of maritime security, freedom of navigation, and peaceful resolution of territorial disputes, but the Obama administration's words are at risk of being hollow if China takes actions to change the facts on the ground. As a vehicle for upholding mutual restraint among its members, the capacity of the East Asia Summit remains limited. There is clearly more work to be done on this front.

"On the goal of sustainable and shared economic growth, evidence of progress remains slim. Obama's claim that "the United States has put more people back to work than all other advanced economies combined" rings hollow in Asia, which features growth rates that rival the United States. China's slowing growth rate at 7.5% still doubles that of the United States.

Moreover, the economic pillar of the rebalance depends wholly on the US-pursued trade agreement, the Trans-Pacific Partnership. This is especially the case now that China appears to have overtaken the United States rhetorically in its support for the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) concept that US officials in the Bill Clinton administration had championed. Without TPP, there will in effect be no rebalance.

"The Obama administration turned allegations of distraction into a virtue by bringing the global agenda to Asia, arguing that the rebalance is "not only about the

United States doing more in Asia, it's about the Asia Pacific region doing more with us around the world".

In fact, the Obama administration's major successes in Beijing involved catalyzing China to show greater responsibility on global issues such as climate change, the Ebola crisis, and cooperation on countering violent extremism.

Some Australian commentators have taken offense at Obama's touting of climate change policies in his Brisbane speech that are at odds with those of the Tony Abbott administration. But a comparison of Obama's Brisbane speech with the one he gave three years ago in Canberra shows that it is not Obama's policies that have changed but those of the Abbott administration compared with its predecessor. Despite policy differences on this issue, security cooperation between the US and Australia has grown closer.

While pursuing a "constructive relationship with China" and welcoming "the continuing rise of a China that is peaceful and prosperous and stable and that plays a responsible role in world affairs", President Obama insisted that "China adhere to the same rules as other nations," drawing a sharp line against Chinese exceptionalism or efforts to bend international rules to China's favor.

In practical terms, the US response to new Chinese initiatives such as the BRICS bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is simultaneously testing both the Obama administration's ability to accept China's rise and whether new Chinese initiatives will abide by or challenge international practices and standards of good governance.

Despite expanded functional cooperation with China on global issues, the rebalance to Asia continues to draw stark lines between the United States and China on universal human rights and rule of law. The Canberra speech in 2011 highlighted those values by pointing to the failure of forms of non-democratic "rule by one man or rule by committee" that "ignore the ultimate source of power and legitimacy - the will of the people".

This time around, in Brisbane, Obama argued for independent judiciaries and open government "because the rule of force must give way to the rule of law". The universality of human rights has not generally been perceived (or advertised by Obama administration officials) as a centerpiece of the US rebalance to Asia, but it may offer the strongest justification for the policy, even if it is also the most starkly divisive issue with which the region must grapple, as well as the most sensitive issue in the US-China relationship.

So where does the rebalance to Asia stand? The consistency of Obama's two speeches in Australia makes the case that the rebalance is real and credible. But whether it is sustainable or sufficient will not depend only on the Obama administration's continued commitment to the policy. It will also depend on the ability of the next US president to carry forward the rebalance in an Asian and global environment that will undoubtedly pose new and even more difficult challenges to US leadership.

## New Trade War erupts between Russia and Belarus

We are beginning the new year without any problems whatsoever, even small ones, in our relations as we have settled them all," President Alyaksandr Lukashenka observed as recently as November 18, while receiving Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. Yet, barely nine days later, Lukashenka disengaged an avalanche of curses directed at Russia such harsh criticism of Russia had not been uttered by Belarusian authorities since the two countries' conflict over oil tariffs in 2010.

"The behavior of the Russian government does not just surprise-it pains me," said Lukashenka during his talk with St. Petersburg's Governor Georgy Poltavchenko. "If trade is not normalized in the nearest future, we will have to react. What kind of behavior is this?" "We are not puppys to drag us by the scruff of the neck," added Lukashenka. He also pointed out that Russia's actions violate the letter and spirit of the Eurasian Union, which will be ushered in on January 1. This rage was all about Russia's temporary ban on exports of some agricultural products from Belarus. Angered by this ban, Lukashenka also made two politically vulnerable pronouncements that may boomerang and undercut his efforts to assert Belarus's independence: "We [meaning Russia and Belarus] are essentially one country. Why are you [Russia] doing this?" exclaimed Lukashenka.

Moreover: "I do not understand what is going on and why. After all, we are Russian people and we must be able to settle our differences".

Moscow blames Belarus for allegedly circumventing Russia's ban on agricultural products from Western Europe. Russia does not mind Belarus importing Western products banned in Russia, processing them, and then delivering them onward to Russia. What it objects to consists of the direct re-export and transport of Western products, ostensibly to Kazakhstan, but actually arranging their sale en route within Russia. It also objects to imports of infected products. Belarusian and Russian accounts of the conflict are incongruous.

Belarusian accounts refer, for example, to a frivolous ban of meat and processed meat exports from multiple producers.

In August, Belarus exported to Russia more than 15,000 tons of pork, beef, sausages and canned meat worth \$71 million; in September, exports increased by 7 percent. However, on November 24, a temporary ban was imposed on exports from nine Belarusian production units and, on November 26, from eight more producers. This was reportedly due to Russian

that we are always in the role of petitioners and those justifying themselves... If [Russian] claims turn out to be unjustified, we have to demand compensation for losses." Another MP, Vladislav Tsydk, called the Russian ban a "game under the rug." This is apparently an allusion at conspiracy aiming to boost prices to please Russian domestic producers.

According to Belarusian Deputy Prime Minister Mikhail Ruzyi, "this is a tough competition and all sorts of methods are used".

export of Norwegian salmon to Russia results in \$250 million in revenue, whereas Belarus's overall gain from using and abusing Russia's ban on agricultural exports from the West amounts to \$50 billion, or 3 percent of Belarus's GDP (Vzglyad, November 25). How such estimates are arrived at is unclear.

Regnum, a Russian news agency that has been most consistent in castigating any inklings of Belarus's distinction from Russia, has conflated its reporting about

price discounts on oil and gas. Whereas Lukashenka's official ideologies, Regnum argues, have been vigorously shaping a new Belarusian identity and an "ethnicographic" regime much like the one found in other "post-Soviet limítrophes from the cordon sanitaire built around Russia" (Regnum, November 27). The already referenced Vzglyad develops the same theme further by pointing out that on December 21, a legal congress of nationalist forces will gather in Minsk that will adopt the manifest in support of



controllers discovering coliform bacteria, salmonella, listeria and excessive antibiotics in Belarusian meat products.

Belarusian controllers, on the other hand, have failed to confirm those findings. A sense of indignation was conveyed by some official statements even before Lukashenka's public display of rage. Thus, according to Alexei Bogdanov from the Belarusian Ministry of Agriculture, "if Russia does not want to accept our products, we will determine where to sell them. We export to 56 countries and always work on [diversifying] our export destinations". Nikolai Ivanchenko, a Belarusian member of parliament (MP), observed, "It is my impression

The view from Russia is different. According to the popular Russian online newspaper Vzglyad, the monitoring by Rosselkhoznadzor (Russian agricultural control-and-overight body) uncovered 11,000 tons of fruits and vegetables from Europe intended for Kazakhstan but sold in Russia. Vzglyad's informers represent interest groups that may be acting on behalf of Russian producers.

Thus Dmitry Vostrikov from an unnamed "association of producers and sellers of food" accused Belarus of just repackaging meat from the European Union. Another interviewed source, Narek Avakyan, from BPS Consult, calculated that Belarus's re-

Lukashenka's independence. Also, the fact that Lukashenka spoke Belarusian during the celebration of the country's Independence Day (July 3) and the upcoming increase in the share of Belarusian-language broadcasting on state-run TV are castigated as a combination of treachery, duplicity and disloyalty (Regnum, November 26).

According to a Russian proverb, "just make a stupid man pray-he will hurt his forehead." It appears that Russian nationalist commentators could not find a better way to illustrate this piece of folk wisdom. A still greater sense of Belarus's distinctiveness is likely to develop as a result.

## China's Xi urges faster development of new weapons systems

BELJING : Chinese President Xi Jinping has urged faster development of advanced new military equipment to help build a strong army, state media reported, as the country steps up an ambitious modernization plan that has rattled nerves across the region, reports Reuters.

Speaking at a two-day conference of the People's Liberation Army, Xi said that military reforms should be "guided by the objective of building a strong army", the official Xinhua news agency said late on Thursday.

"Advanced weaponry is the embodiment of a modern army and a crucial support for national security and rejuvenation," it cited Xi as saying.

"Equipment systems are now in a period of strategic opportunities and at a key point for rapid development."

Xi has been pushing to strengthen the fighting ability of China's 2.3 million-strong armed forces as they project

power across disputed waters in the East and South China Seas.

China has developed emerging stealth fighter technology, anti-satellite missiles and now has one aircraft car-

rier in operation and is planning more.

Defense spending this year is set to rise by 12.2 percent to 808.2 billion yuan (\$131.3 billion), a number many governments and analysts say is not

representative of the country's true defense outlays.

Xi said that new weapons must be "innovative, practical and forward-thinking to meet the demands of actual combat and fill in the weak spots of China's existing equipment".

"Military officers at all levels should play a leading role and use actual combat to guide soldiers to improve their capacity to operate weapons," he said.

However the country's armed forces, the world's largest, came under criticism earlier this year from serving and retired officers and state media, who questioned whether they were too corrupt to win a war.

Part of Xi's much-vaunted campaign against deep-rooted graft has targeted the military.

In October, the government said one of China's most senior former military officers had confessed to taking "massive" bribes in exchange for help in promotions.



China's President Xi Jinping attends a news conference in Wellington. Reuters

## Japan top court set to acquit police of fatal shooting

TOKYO: Japan's top court is set to acquit two police officers who shot and killed a man in a fleeing vehicle, reports said.

The Supreme Court has decided to clear two officers over the 2003 death in Nara, after more than a decade of legal to- and fro-ing, Kyodo and public broadcaster NHK said.

The court's No. 3 Petty Bench has formally rejected an appeal against two lower court rulings clearing Motofumi Hagiwara and Yoshihiro Higashi of killing Sojitu Ko while he was in the front passenger seat of a moving vehicle.

The ruling is expected to be finalised soon, the reports said.

Nara District Court found in 2012 that Ko died as a result of two shots fired by the police officers to stop the fleeing vehicle. But it ruled the officers were aiming at the driver's arm and did not intend to kill anyone. Ko, 28, was suspected of theft at the time. The Osaka High Court later upheld the ruling.

Reports from some online media outlets said Ko was an ethnic Korean, although it was not clear if he possessed South Korean citizenship.

## Ancient earthquake uncovered in China

BEIJING: Scientists have found evidence of a powerful earthquake 3,000 years ago in central China, apparently the earliest known tremor in the country's history, state media reported. The earthquake, which hit an area now part of Henan province, was of magnitude 6.8 to 7.1, archaeologists told the state-run Xinhua news agency on Thursday.

Signs of the quake were first found in 2005 in seriously damaged ash pits, residences and graves that lay buried under a village in the province, Xinhua said.

Carbon dating indicated the earthquake struck the area sometime between 1500 BC and 1260 BC, it added. China did not start keeping seismological records until 843 BC.

## Malaysia says 18 deaths could be linked to Myanmar unrest

KUALA LUMPUR: Police have detained 15 people from Myanmar over a string of gruesome murders in a popular Malaysian tourist destination, and believe the killings are linked to ethnic unrest in their native country, reports said Friday, reports UNB.

Public anxiety has risen in Malaysia's historic state of Penang over the past few months as mutilated corpses or severed body parts have turned up with at least 18 mysterious and unexplained murders of Myanmar nationals.



With its relatively more developed economy, Malaysia is a sought-after destination for Myanmar refugees and illegal migrants both Buddhists and Rohingya many of whom bring along their sectarian grudges.

Myanmar activists in Malaysia say dozens of Buddhists have been killed in revenge attacks related to the Rakhine violence.

Myanmar Buddhists complain that authorities in Muslim-majority Malaysia have done little to stop the attacks. The recent string of

killings in Penang popular with tourists for its beaches, historic capital of Georgetown and polyglot cuisine has fuelled concerns.

Some of those murdered in Penang were found with their throats slit or heads and limbs severed. The Malay Mail and other reports did not specify whether those killed, or detained were Buddhist or Muslim. No further information about the victims has been officially released.

Hundreds of thousands of Myanmar asylum-seekers and economic migrants-most of them Buddhists have made it to Malaysia.

Refugee activists say the flow is accelerating following the Rakhine violence and continued repression of Rohingya.

Myanmar's government views its roughly 1.3 million Rohingya as foreigners, denying most of them citizenship.

Penang is on Malaysia's northern coast, along the dangerous sea route via southern Thailand that is taken by Rohingya fleeing Myanmar.

Authorities had made little comment until now but the state's police chief was quoted Friday saying they now believe the killings are linked to Myanmar's sectarian bloodshed where there has been violent clashes between Muslims and Buddhists.

"We can tell that these are the work of Myanmar nationals. They bring their hatred here from their country of origin," Abdul Rahim Hanafi was quoted as saying by the Malay Mail.

"It was revenge they brought here from their country." He said police were still investigating. The report provided little further detail and AFP was not immediately able to reach Penang police for comment.

Violent clashes between majority Buddhists and Muslim Rohingya who the United Nations calls one of the most persecuted minorities in the world erupted in 2012 in western Myanmar's Rakhine state. The violence has left about 200 people dead and up to 140,000, mostly Rohingya, displaced.

**Public anxiety has risen in Malaysia's historic state of Penang over the past few months as mutilated corpses or severed body parts have turned up - with at least 18 mysterious and unexplained murders of Myanmar nationals. AP**

## Historical Day

### Haraprasad Shastri's Birthday

Haraprasad Shastri was born on this day in 1853 in Kumira village in Khulna, Bengal (now in Bangladesh) to a family that hailed from Nathai in North 24 Parganas. Haraprasad Shastri known as Haraprasad Bhattacharya, was an Indian academic, Sanskrit scholar, archivist and historian of Bengali literature. He is most known for discovering the Charyapada, the earliest known examples of Bengali literature. Haraprasad Shastri held numerous positions. He became a professor at the Sanskrit College in 1883. At the same time, he worked as an Assistant Translator with the Bengal government. Between 1886 and 1894, besides teaching at the Sanskrit College, he was the Librarian of the Bengal Library. In 1895 he headed the Sanskrit department at Presidency College.

He became Principal of Sanskrit College in 1900, leaving in 1908 to join the government's Bureau of Information. Also, from 1921-1924, he was Professor and Head of the Department of Bengali and Sanskrit at Dhaka University. "Shastri's Benevier Meye (The Merchant's Daughter, 1920) is written in a style that is very close to the colloquial. It reconstructs with plausibility and brilliance the domestic and social atmosphere in West Bengal in the eleventh century. His other work of fiction (Kannamala, a story tale) also is well-written.

### Philippines braces for powerful, erratic typhoon

Manila: A wide swath of the Philippines, including the capital Manila, braced Friday for a dangerously erratic and powerful typhoon approaching from the Pacific, about a year after the country was lashed by Typhoon Haiyan that left more than 7,300 people dead, reports AP. Typhoon Hagupit - Filipino for "smash" - strengthened overnight with its sustained winds intensifying to 215 kilometers (134 miles) per hour and gusts of 250 kph (155 mph). The local weather agency PAGASA's forecasts show the typhoon may hit Eastern Samar province late Saturday or early Sunday.

But a forecast by the U.S. military's Joint Typhoon Warning Center in Hawaii said Hagupit (pronounced HA'-goop-pit) may veer northward after making landfall and possibly threatening Manila, which has population of more than 12 million people.

"We have alerted the people of Manila and we're ready," Mayor Joseph Estrada said, while acknowledging "these typhoons change direction all the time."

It is currently 450 kilometers (280 miles) from the country's eastern coast in the Pacific Ocean and moving slowly.

If the first forecast holds, Hagupit's path will send it barreling inland into central Philippines along the same route where Typhoon Haiyan leveled villages and left more than 7,300 dead and missing in November last year.



The disputed Kashmir region is claimed by both India and Pakistan. BBC

## Major gunbattle near Kashmir border kills 17

SRINAGAR: Militants in disputed Kashmir attacked an Indian army camp Friday, triggering a fierce gunbattle that left 11 Indian troops and six suspected assailants dead, reports AP.

An army officer told The Associated Press the rebels hurled grenades and fired automatic rifles as they tried to enter an artillery unit of the camp in the Uri region before dawn. Some succeeded while firing wildly, officials said.

The sprawling camp, also the regional headquarters of the army's artillery regiment, is near the heavily militarized line of control that divides the Himalayan region into an Indian-administered portion and a Pakistan-controlled side.

Eight soldiers including a lieutenant colonel and three policemen were killed on the Indian side, along with six militants, police said. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak to media.

"The firing has stopped right now," the Indian police chief in Kashmir, K. Rajendra, said. "We're searching and sanitizing the area and clearing any unexploded grenades hurled by militants."

None of several rebel groups active in Kashmir issued any statement about Friday's fighting, which erupted two days after a gunbattle broke out in the neighboring Handwara

region. Six suspected rebels and one Indian army officer were killed.

Also Friday, government forces intercepted two suspected militants on the outskirts of Srinagar, Kashmir's main city, leading to a brief exchange of gunfire, police said. One rebel was killed while the troops cordoned the area and were looking for the second suspect.

The rebel groups have been fighting against Indian rule since 1989. More than 68,000 people have been killed since 1989 in the uprising and Indian military crackdown, which also largely suppressed rebel activity.

There has been a flurry of recent attacks, however, as the region holds local elections. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has visited twice in the last month, and is due to return Monday to give a campaign speech in Srinagar.

The violence was not deterring voters, as election officials said turnout for the first two of five phases was about 70 percent.

India and Pakistan have fought two of three wars since 1947 over their rival claims to the territory. India accuses Pakistan of supporting the militants with arms and trainings, while Islamabad staunchly denies this, saying it offers only morale and diplomatic support for their cause.

## Australian parliament backs migrant reforms

AUSTRALIA: The Australian parliament has approved changes to immigration laws that include reintroducing controversial temporary visas for refugees, reports UNB.

The bill will allow refugees to live and work in Australia for three to five years, but denies them permanent protection.

It was passed by 34 votes to 32 in the senate and later backed by MPs. Australia currently detains all asylum seekers who arrive by boat, holding them in offshore processing camps. It says that those found to be refugees will not be permanently resettled in Australia, under tough new policies aimed at ending the flow of

refugee status are processed. The bill was narrowly approved in the senate after intense debate in a late-night sitting. It was then passed into law by the House of Representatives, where the government has a majority. Prime Minister Tony Abbott described the move as "a win for Australia".



Thousands of asylum seekers have risked the perilous sea journey to Australia. Reuters

## Spot Light News

### Modi refuses to fire minister for derogatory remark



NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi has rejected demands to fire a government minister whose derogatory comments against Muslims have led to a furor that has shut down the Indian Parliament for four days, reports AP.

### Ailing Thai king cancels appearance for 87th birthday



### China presents US with list of alleged fugitives



BANGKOK: Thailand's ailing but much adored King Bhumibol Adulyadej cancelled plans to hold an annual audience to mark his 87th birthday Friday on the advice of his doctors, the palace said. The king, who is the world's longest-serving monarch, has spent most of the last few months in hospital as fears over his health mount in a nation where he is seen as a unifying, father-figure throughout a turbulent six-decade rule.

### No water in Maldives capital, govt seeks help



COLOMBO: The Maldives has appealed for help after its capital's water supply was cut off because of a fire in the city's water treatment plant. Government Minister Mohamed Shareef said Friday that power to the water plant in the capital, Male, had left 100,000 residents without water. The fire happened Thursday.

### 11 go blind after cataract surgery in India



New Delhi: Authorities have ordered an investigation after at least 11 poor and elderly people went blind following cataract surgeries performed at a free medical camp run by a charity in northern India, reports AP. The top official in Amritsar city says the operations were performed Nov. 4 on dozens of patients over 50 years old from both Amritsar and nearby Gurdaspur.

### Myanmar rebels say trust is low



Bangkok: A leader of ethnic Kachin rebels fighting in Myanmar said Friday that trust in the country's military-dominated government was at an all-time low despite years of peace talks aimed at resolving the conflict in the country's jade-rich north, reports AP. But rebel Gen. Sumlut Gun Maw told



France's President Francois Hollande (L) shakes hands with Russia's President Vladimir Putin during their meeting on the sidelines of G20 summit in Brisbane. Reuters

## France's Hollande urges Putin to look ahead, not back, over Ukraine

ASTANA: French President Francois Hollande urged Russian leader Vladimir Putin on Friday to look to the future rather than the past to help ease tension over the Ukraine crisis, reports Reuters.

In a policy speech on Thursday, Putin evoked the lessons of history to shift the blame for many of Russia's problems on to the West, accusing "enemies of yesterday" of trying to bring a new Iron Curtain down around Russia.

"As for the declaration by Mr Putin, who went back to the past in his speech, we should concentrate on the future - while not forgetting the lessons of the past," Hollande said through a translator at a news conference during a visit to Astana, the

capital of Kazakhstan.

"The tension, the pressure at the moment can in no way serve as a solution to problems," he said, suggesting that he, Putin, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and German Chancellor Angela Merkel should "start the process of reducing tension" together. He gave no details.

More than 4,300 people have been killed in eastern Ukraine since the separatist rebellions erupted there in April, soon after Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine following the overthrow of a Moscow-backed president. Hollande last month suspended indefinitely the delivery of the first of two Mistral helicopter carriers ordered by Russia because

of the conflict in Ukraine.

Speaking beside Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, Hollande said any proposals to end the violence should be based on the principles agreed in a Sept. 5 ceasefire agreement.

He said that meant "the principles of territorial integrity, a ceasefire and decentralisations of the eastern regions."

Nazarbayev, a Putin ally, said sanctions imposed on Russia by the United States and the European Union over the crisis in Ukraine would have only a limited effect. "One should not underestimate Russia's might," he said. "This is the biggest country by size and the richest nation."

## US training of Syrian rebels still months away

COPENHAGEN (Reuters) - Western plans to train and equip non-jihadi rebels in Syria will not start until at least late February, a leading opposition figure said on Friday, depriving them of support they need to counter both rival insurgents and Syrian government forces.

The relatively moderate rebels loosely grouped under the "Free Syrian Army" label are struggling to hold

their ground against much more militant groups such as Islamic State and the al Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front and against government forces.

A U.S.-led coalition is bombing Islamic State, which has seized swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq. The West is also opposed to President Bashar al-Assad, though he has defied their demands to quit since Syria's civil war erupted in 2011.

Hadi al-Bahra, head of the Turkey-based Syrian opposition National Coalition, said the United States and its allies needed to find ways of increasing help to the moderate rebels.

"The issue is that the developing policies and procedures of putting this program into operation take a very long time," he said after meeting Denmark's foreign minister in Copenhagen.

"It is expected to start by the end of February or end of March, which is a very long time to leave the Free Syrian Army at (its) current level of assistance."

Syrian rebels say vetted groups have already received a small amount of U.S. military support through a CIA-run program.

The training program is at the core of U.S. President Barack Obama's strategy in Syria, a multi-year plan to field local forces to halt and eventually roll back Islamic State fighters, while keeping American troops off the battlefield.

Bahra, whose group is widely seen as having little influence on the ground in Syria, said the United States now focused on curbing Islamic State-had "forgotten" the fight against Assad and was not doing enough to address what he called the "cause of terrorism and extremism in the area".

He said he was seeking Denmark's support to seek greater help from the World Food Programme, a U.N. agency which said this week it was cutting aid to 1.7 million Syrian refugees in the Middle East due to a lack of funds.



Rebel fighters prepare to fire a machine gun towards forces loyal to Syria's President Bashar al-Assad in the Jabal al-Akrad area in Syria's northwestern Latakia province. PTI

### Spot Light News

#### US jury indicts 4 in Philippine hostage taking

Washington: U.S. jury has indicted four Philippine nationals sought in the 2011 kidnapping of an American woman and her teenage son during a family vacation in the Philippines, reports AP. Gerfa Lunsmann was held hostage for 82 days and her son Kevin for 151 days in the abduction, in which the family was forced to pay ransom.

#### France pulling 500 troops from C. African Republic

Paris: France's defense minister says 500 of the 2,000 French troops in Central African Republic will be withdrawn by spring now that security is returning and U.N. peacekeepers are in place, reports AP. Jean-Yves Le Drian said on Friday that security in the former French colony has progressively returned with schools reopened and some 8,000 peacekeepers fanning out.

#### UN peacekeeper in Liberia tests positive for Ebola

Monrovia: The U.N. peacekeeping force in Liberia says one of its members has been infected with Ebola. This is the mission's third case linked to the disease. The previous two died. The country's top U.N. envoy, Karin Landgren, said in a statement late Thursday that a peacekeeper tested positive the day before. The patient is being treated in Monrovia.

#### Historical Day

##### Washington Monument completed

On this day in 1884, in Washington, D.C., workers place a nine-inch aluminum pyramid atop a tower of white marble, completing the construction of an impressive monument to the city's namesake and the nation's first president, George Washington. As early as 1783, the infant U.S. Congress decided that a statue of George Washington, the great Revolutionary War general, should be placed near the site of the new Congressional building, wherever it might be. After then-President Washington asked him to lay out a new federal capital on the Potomac River in 1791, architect Pierre L'Enfant left a place for the statue at the western end of the sweeping National Mall (near the monument's present location). It wasn't until 1832, however - 33 years after Washington's death - that anyone really did anything about the monument. It wasn't until 1832, however - 33 years after Washington's death - that anyone really did anything about the monument.

JOHANNESBURG: South Africans are marking the anniversary of the death of Nelson Mandela. The former statesman died Dec. 5 last year after a long illness at the age of 95, reports AP.

Speaking at a formal ceremony on Friday in the capital Pretoria, Mandela's widow Graca Machel said the former president was at peace when he died.

The ceremony held at the foot of a bronze statue of the Nobel laureate was attended by the Mandela family, his close friend and fellow Robben Island prison inmate Ahmed Kathrada and his lawyer George Bizos. The ceremony was followed by an interfaith service at Freedom Park, an open-air memorial, also in Pretoria.

Commemoration ceremonies are being held around the country, including at Mandela's ancestral home in Qunu, in the country's Eastern Cape Province.

Events are being held across South Africa to mark one year since the death of Nelson Mandela, including a wreath-laying ceremony and a cricket match.

Anti-apartheid movement veterans joined Mr Mandela's widow, Graca Machel, at a remembrance service in Pretoria. Sirens and vuvuzelas sounded across the

country before a commemorative three minutes' silence was held.

There was a worldwide outpouring of grief when South Africa's first black president died a year ago aged 95.

The body gave in but Madiba's spirit never, never changed, it was always the same until the end."

Mr Mandela, also known by his clan name of Madiba, spent 27 years in prison for fighting white-minority rule in South Africa. One of his granddaughters, Ndileka Mandela, told the BBC on Friday that South Africans were still upholding Mandela's legacy and honouring his memory by living by his values of peace and reconciliation.

"That's just the spirit of who granddad was, that even after a year that he's gone peace still prevails, people still upholding his legacy and what he stood for, because he stood for peace and reconciliation."

Many South Africans said they were reflecting on whether the nation is following in his footsteps, says the BBC's Milton Nkosi in Johannesburg.

Veteran liberation struggle hero Ahmed Kathrada addressed the remembrance service at the Union Buildings in the capital, Pretoria, on Friday morning.



A candlelight service was held in the Soweto district of Johannesburg on Thursday evening. BBC

#### Arrests made in Balkan war massacre

Prijepolje: Police in Serbia and Bosnia arrested 15 people

Friday in a wartime massacre that traumatized the Balkans and came to symbolize a culture of impunity that still shields notorious wartime death squads and their masters, reports UNB.

Prosecutors from the two bitter wartime enemy countries told The Associated Press they worked together to crack the case of the Strpci massacre of Feb. 27, 1993, in which 19 men were snatched off a train at the height of the Balkan conflict.

Officers carried out a pre-dawn sweep that netted 10 suspects in Bosnia and five in Serbia, including the brother of a jailed warlord, ex-militia members and a former Bosnian Serb general who commanded the military in the area.

A court gave her the option of paying a fine to remain at liberty until her appeal.

Ms Khawaja, who comes from Bahrain's most prominent dissident family, faces other cases next week.

Amnesty International said it would consider Ms Khawaja "a prisoner of conscience" if she were jailed. "Tearing up a photo of the head of state should not be a criminal offence," Amnesty's Middle East and North Africa Deputy Director Said Boumedouha said. "Amnesty International is calling for this and all of Zainab Al-Khawaja's other

convictions to be quashed and all outstanding charges to be dropped."

The dual Bahraini and Danish national has been detained several times since pro-democracy protests erupted in the Gulf island nation in 2011.

Ms Khawaja was released from prison in February, after spending nearly a year behind the bars for participating in an illegal gathering and insulting police.

She reportedly refused to appeal before higher courts because she believed that Bahrain's judiciary was controlled by the government. She also refused to pay bail.

Earlier this week, her younger sister, Mariam, received a one-year sentence in absentia on charges of assaulting police officers.



Zainab al-Khawaja has been detained several times since 2011. AP

#### Police in Mexico kill 6 kidnap suspects, free 2

Mexico City: Mexican police said they killed six members of a drug cartel and rescued two kidnap victims at a house in the Gulf coast state of Veracruz, reports AP. The state police force said Thursday that the suspects opened fire on members of an elite police unit during a raid on the house in the coastal city of Poza Rica. Officers returned fire, killing the six suspects, the police statement said.

#### Netanyahu weak, rightwing strong

Jerusalem: A poll conducted ahead of Israel's March elections indicates strong support for the country's rightwing bloc but also doubts over Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's leadership, reports AP. The poll, published Friday in the Maariv newspaper, shows that together, five rightwing and religious parties would receive 63 seats in the 120-seat parliament, enough to form a government.

#### Syrian militant threatens Lebanese Shiites

Beirut: A Sunni militant commander in Syria who has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group has threatened to "retaliate" against Lebanese Shiites over the arrest of his wife and two children in Lebanon, according to a new militant posting, reports AP. Abu Ali al-Shishani also says in a statement released late Thursday that the mediation underway for the release of 20 Lebanese soldiers held captive by IS and al-Qaida-linked militants in Syria will stop until his family is freed.

## Swapnadal on tour to India



### Entertainment Desk

Theatre troupe Swapnadal's is going to stage two of their drama productions at two different theatre festivals in India early next year.

The group has been invited to stage its anti-

war production "Tringsho Shotabdee" at 17th Bharat Rang Mahotsav, India's national theatre festival, which will be held in New Delhi on February 1-18.

The play has been selected to represent Bangladeshi theatre at the largest theatre festival in Asia, to be participated by 12 other

countries.

Swapnadal has also been invited to stage another of their productions, an adaptation of Howard Fast's "Spartacus," at the Second Bangla Theatre Festival in Kolkata from January 24 to February 4, organised by Prachyo Natyadal, Kolkata.



## Aamir Khan seeks Shah Rukh and Salman's feedback on PK

### Entertainment Desk

Taking their newfound friendship a step ahead, Aamir Khan is all set to hold a special screening of his upcoming film, PK for Shah Rukh and Salman Khan.

The trio recently met during the anniversary celebrations of a TV show and their camaraderie was for all to see. The level of comfort was apparent when the three did the towel dance together and also kept taking digs at each other throughout the show.

A report in Mid-day quotes a source as saying that Aamir wants to show the first copy of his

film to Salman and SRK and has told the production team to arrange a special screening for them. Aamir is also apparently looking forward to their reaction and feedback.

The report quotes another source, close to the film, as confirming that Aamir has indeed planned a special preview. He further states that during their recent meeting, the three of them had a long discussion over PK. And when both Salman and Shah Rukh expressed their wish to watch the film, they were promised a screening within a week.



## Aishwarya Rai Bachchan launches Longines store in Mumbai

### Entertainment Desk

Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, who has been associated with Longines brand for 15 years, recently launched their new boutique store in Mumbai.

While talking to the media persons, the 41-year old actress said, "I believe elegance is innate. I think that's what speaks volume about the personality of the individual." The 'Jodhaa Akbar' star looked chic in a black leather collared Gucci number with knee-high boots, also by Gucci. Rai is married to Abhishek Bachchan since 2007.

## Prestigious 16th Asian Art Biennale being held at BSA

### Entertainment Desk

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy (BSA) is holding one of the biggest art events in the Asia Pacific region, 16th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh.

The first edition of the event was held in the country in 1981 with the aim to support and develop young artists in their chosen fields. Continuing along those lines, this year 209 Bangladeshi artists and 104 foreign artists from 31 different countries are participating in the prestigious event.

The participating countries include Iraq, Iran, Syria, Palestine, India, Kuwait, China, Nepal, Brunei, Sri Lanka, Bahrain, Afghanistan, Philippines, Maldives, Australia, Pakistan, the UAE, Japan, Kazakhstan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Lebanon, East Timor, Singapore, Jordan, Thailand, Bhutan, Qatar, Korea and Indonesia.

Artists Samanjit Roy Chowdhury, Monirul Islam, Syed Abdullah Khalid, Mansur Ul Karim and Dr Farida Zaman constituted the five-member committee that selected 228 works by the 209 artists from a submission pool of 518 applicants. As a new addition this year, performance art has been included in the exhibition for the first time, with 10 artists taking part in it.

This month-long event was inaugurated by Finance Minister AMA Muhith on Monday, December 1. A seminar titled "Contemporary New

Media Art Practices" was held on Tuesday in two sessions.

Among a total of 432 artworks, three has been selected for the grand prize: "Mourn of Burned Women" by Gulshan Hossain (Bangladesh), "Long March for Water" by Md Abdul Momen (Bangladesh), and "Arab Character," by Hessa Abdulla A Kalla (Qatar).

Another six works has been chosen for the Honourable Mention Award. The artists of those artworks are Biswajit Goswami (Bangladesh), Maynul Islam Paul (Bangladesh), Kamruzzaman Shadhin (Bangladesh), Nurul Amin

(Bangladesh), Dr Fakhriya Al-Yahyai (Oman) and Hamed Al-Jabri (Oman).

The 16th Asian Art Biennale Bangladesh 2014 is the portrayal of human emotion, craving, restraints and challenges in contemporary Asian life through arts. Here, the creative art works are not only reflecting social consequences, but also exhibiting the control of existing digital age over lives. The art exhibition of Asia Pacific nations replete with modernity and tradition will be open for all until December 31, from 11am to 8pm on weekdays and from 3pm to 8pm on Fridays.



## Horoscope

### Aries (March 21 - April 19)

You may be so caught up in your personal vision of the future that you lose focus on what you're doing in the present moment. Making a far-reaching decision could create problems if you don't stop to think about the impact of your current actions. Fortunately, you have an excellent chance to advance toward your destination if you remember your original intent. Your dreams are highly motivational as long as you take concrete steps today.

### Taurus (April 20 - May 20)

You might be overly confident that everyone will support your agenda today, even if you don't have all your ducks in a row yet. However, people aren't willing to jump on your bandwagon unless they have sufficient facts to justify your plans. Although you may make an emotional appeal, you could come across more aggressive now than you intend. Soften your approach since you appear overly desperate if you push too hard. Letting others reach their conclusions in their own time ultimately works better.

### Gemini (May 21 - June 20)

Misinterpreting another person's actions is possible today since you're prone to making snap judgments. You react so quickly now that logic doesn't have a chance to have influence your behavior. You might believe that people are angry when they are only expressing their true convictions. But open conflict won't lead to a satisfactory solution, so don't confuse someone's disagreement with a personal attack. Simply clarify your differences and seek common ground to create a foundation of trust.

### Cancer (June 21 - July 22)

Although you haven't lost your eye for detail, it's easier to see the potential in a situation now rather than what's wrong. It's not in your nature to criticize anyone; you would rather help those you love accomplish something meaningful. Your approval influences the changing circumstances by motivating others to reach for the stars. It doesn't require a lot of effort to find something nice to say -- and your support goes a long way toward boosting someone's self-confidence. Ultimately, you benefit from the power of positive thought just as much as anyone else.

### Leo (July 23 - August 22)

Expressing your passion for a cause is one thing, but instigating a fight to prove yourself right is totally different. Although you might inadvertently turn a bit of intelligent caution into a battle of egos, this unwise strategy doesn't give you the platform to demonstrate your wisdom. You could accidentally send the wrong message, making others think that you are being petty by focusing on divisive tactics. Winning a competition doesn't always lead to success; remember, you're all on the same team.

### Virgo (August 23 - September 22)

Balancing your innate need to have all the details in place with your current desire to dream big makes it challenging to find peace of mind. You're more intrigued to explore your creativity now without worrying whether or not your ideas will actually work. Nevertheless, you can't just toss the facts out the window. Taking enough time to acknowledge the truth before surrendering to your imagination makes you more effective in the long run. Adding a dash of pragmatism gives your fantasies a fighting chance to come true.

### Libra (September 23 - October 22)

One of your strengths is how you help colleagues feel at ease by supporting their efforts, but you might take your accommodating manner too far today without even realizing it. Unfortunately, focusing all of your attention on everyone else's needs now could impede chasing your creative pursuits. Believe it or not, giving others more freedom to succeed or fail on their own is the ultimate empowerment. Stepping back just a little frees you to make a surprisingly significant breakthrough of your own.

### Scorpio (October 23 - November 21)

You might attempt to avoid an uncomfortable feeling that's growing stronger by the day, but the only way to resolve the tension is to simply stop struggling and face it. Instead of involving others in your unfolding emotional melodrama, make an effort to find a spiritual solution to your dilemma first. Losing your temper won't bring anyone closer to happiness. Working toward your long-term goals reconnects you with what matters most to your heart.

### Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21)

Rolling with a few surprises today is a piece of cake. Luckily, your cheerful resilience enables you to deal with one noisy distraction after another. Although the Moon is in your sign, her collaboration with intellectual Uranus empowers you to display your brilliance while intuitively responding to an emotional drama. Just remember, you don't always have to be rational. It's sweeter to escape into your dreams for a while if you know you'll be pulled back into reality by tomorrow.

### Capricorn (December 22 - January 19)

You don't want to reveal your new plan yet and your somber attitude might be an effective cover for your current optimism. Thankfully, you can rely on your natural organizational skills to throw everyone off track. They are focused on your external efforts while you are free to buzz away in your imagination. Keep up outer appearances while you embark on your spiritual journey. Your inner work is rejuvenating for your soul and will fuel your ambitions for days to come.

### Aquarius (January 20 - February 18)

Your social life is looking a lot perkier this week, with a chance that one meeting could have that special sizzle that indicates instant chemistry. With Mars now in Libra, this is an excellent time to explore new ways to meet people and move in new circles. You might also find that a work-related opportunity shows huge potential to become something solid and perhaps lucrative. Don't ignore an opening that could seem daunting. Taking up this challenge may work in your favor.

### Pisces (February 19 - March 20)

Your friends may seek out your wise counsel today because your view of the future rises above differences of opinion and petty interpersonal politics. Maybe it's because you are just being too vague to commit to one position or another. However, it's more likely that your perspective has grown into a cosmic one, and you have chosen the moral high road. Don't be coerced into taking sides now. In the midst of emotional drama, play out your role of mediator with integrity and grace. Demonstrating your compassion saves the day.



Pakistani batsman Sarfraz Ahmed (L) celebrates after scoring half century (50 runs) during the first International T20 cricket match at Dubai International Stadium in Dubai. Dawn

## Sarfraz 76\* steers Pakistan into 1-0 lead

### Sports Desk

Opening for the first time in a T20 international, Sarfraz Ahmed made a breezy unbeaten 76 to steer Pakistan to a seven-wicket win over New Zealand at the Dubai International Stadium. Sarfraz put on 51 with Awas Zia for the first wicket, and an unbroken 43 with Umar Akmal for the fourth wicket, to take Pakistan past their target of 136 with five balls remaining, Akmal ending the contest with a straight six off James Neesham, reports Cricinfo.

New Zealand had two good partnerships in the middle part of their innings, with Corey Anderson involved in both, but struggled either side of them. Their total was at least 15 short of being genuinely challenging, even if Pakistan kept the game interesting by losing two wickets to run-outs.

Sarfraz had only batted once in his four previous T20 games for Pakistan, at number eight, and he quickly set about

showing what a waste of talent that had been, slapping Mitchell McClenaghan to the point boundary and stepping down the track to the debutant fast bowler Matt Henry to sweep him over the fine-leg boundary.

At the other end, Awas Zia looked a little leaden-footed against the pace of Henry and Adam Milne, but quickly realised he would be best served giving Sarfraz the strike. The pair brought up Pakistan's first half-century opening stand in 18 matches before lazy running brought about its end at the start of the ninth over. When Luke Ronchi threw out Mohammad Hafeez an over later, when the batsmen unwisely tried to pinch a leg-by off a fumble, Pakistan were in a bit of a bother. Sarfraz, though, wasn't letting the wickets disrupt his flow. He immediately crashed Corey Anderson for successive fours, and slogged him for a six over cow corner to bring up his half-century. That over brought Pakistan 17

runs, and brought the equation down to 59 required off 54 balls.

Sarfraz simply needed someone to stay with him and Haris Sohail seemed to be doing that before he swiped McClenaghan straight to the short midwicket fielder with Pakistan still 39 short of their target. Akmal came in, having missed out on Pakistan's recent Test upsurge, and instantly reminded fans of what they had been missing. Henry returned to bowl the 16th over, and Akmal took three fours off that over, the middle one a sweet pick-up shot over wide long-on. It was a canter from there on. Sent in to bat, New Zealand lost three wickets in their first three overs, each to a different bowler. Anwar Ali and Sohail Tanvir trapped Kane Williamson and Anton Devcich lbw, respectively, before Mohammad Irfan then consumed Ross Taylor with one that lifted from just back of a length and popped off the shoulder of the bat to point.

## Rampant Real Madrid eye new record territory

### Sports Desk

La Liga leaders Real Madrid will look to continue their sparkling form with a record-equalling 18th consecutive victory in all competitions as they host Celta Vigo on Saturday, reports Dalyanet.

The European champions

surpassed their previous club record of 15 straight wins with victory over Malaga last weekend and, following a 5-0 Copa del Rey thrashing of Cornellà in midweek, Los Blancos now have Barcelona's Spanish record stretch of 18 victories from the 2005/06 season in their sights. Madrid have now scored 64 goals on their winning streak, conceding only nine, but they know they will face a stern test against a Celta side that took all three points at the Camp Nou last month and secured a draw away to Atlético Madrid in September.

James Rodriguez's double against third-tier outfit Cornellà meant that he is the only Madrid player to score in four competitions this season and his impressive start to life in the Spanish capital has not been lost on manager Carlo Ancelotti.

"He is demonstrating his quality and showing great attitude during this period. We are delighted with him and he'll definitely improve," the Italian said.

"I really like his attitude because he is humble and that is important. Having a humble player with his quality is a perfect ingredient for the team."

Cristiano Ronaldo was

given a rare night off on Tuesday, but the World Player of the Year will return looking to continue his lethal form in front of goal, having netted 20 goals in just 12 league appearances thus far.

Jesse Rodriguez, who made his comeback from a nine-month injury layoff in midweek, could also feature in La Liga for the first time this season, while Sami Khedira, who was forced off with concussion, should also be fit. Barcelona host Espanyol in the Catalan derby on Sunday as they look to keep pace at the top of the table and build on their run of six successive victories.

Andres Iniesta, who had not featured since limping off in the 3-1 Clasico reverse in October, made his comeback as the Blaugrana swept aside Huesca 4-0 on Wednesday evening in the Copa del Rey, scoring his first goal in eight months in the process.

"It's never easy to come back after so long, but I felt fine and that's the most important thing. I was able to play without feeling any trouble and that's calmed me down a lot," said the Spain midfielder.

Lionel Messi, Luis Suárez, Neymar, Jordi Alba and Sergio Busquets will all return having sat out the trip to Aragon, while Claudio Bravo is expected to start in goal. Champions Atlético Madrid can, temporarily at least, leapfrog Barcelona as they travel to struggling Elche on Saturday.

Back-to-back home wins over Malaga and Deportivo have seen the champions remain in contention to retain their title, four points

behind city rivals Real, but their indifferent away form this season will be put to the test at the Martinez Valero.

After struggling to break down a resilient L'Hospitalet side in the first half in Cup action on Wednesday, the introduction of Antoine Griezmann at the break provided the spark that Diego Simeone's side needed as they went on to seal a comfortable 3-0 victory and almost certainly set up a Madrid derby in the last 16.

Simeone, who was shortlisted for the World Coach of the Year award earlier this week, used the opportunity to give some of his fringe players a run out, and the performances of both Griezmann and Alessio Cerci will give the Argentine food for thought regarding his team selection.



Real Madrid will look to continue their sparkling form with a record-equalling 18th consecutive victory in all competitions as they host Celta Vigo on Saturday. AP



It was a large and varied crowd that turned out to pay tribute to Phillip Hughes in Macksville, with several eminent names thrown in, but the farewell was personal, fitting and a good reminder of the meaning of life. AP

## News in Brief



### Kallis appointed Knight Riders' mentor

#### Sports Desk

Jacques Kallis will not play for Kolkata Knight Riders in the IPL from next season, but will continue to remain with the franchise in his new role as mentor and batting consultant. Kallis was first bought by Knight Riders in 2011 for \$1.1 million, and then this February, when all the players were put back for auction, the franchise bought him back through the right to match card option for Rs 5.5 crore (\$916,000). He was the most consistent performer for Knight Riders - their best batsman in 2011 and then in the top three in the following two seasons. Kallis was also instrumental in the team winning their maiden title in 2012.



### Djokovic top dog in 2015, says Agassi

#### Sports Desk

American legend Andre Agassi said Novak Djokovic could be poised for a period of dominance in men's tennis after showing he can rise "a level above" his peers without even trying too hard. Eight-time Grand Slam-winner Agassi said barring mishap, the world number one looked set for a long stay on top of the rankings after moving out in front this year. The 27-year-old Serb won seven titles this season, including Wimbledon, and finished with a flourish at the World Tour Finals in London. With Federer now 33, Nadal returning from his latest lay-off and Murray struggling for form, the seven-time Slam winner, who recently became a father, could now stay on top, Agassi said.



### Deschamps hints at possible final game for Henry

#### Sports Desk

France coach Didier Deschamps has hinted that he could give Thierry Henry a final game as a "tribute" to his playing career. The 37-year-old Henry is contemplating his future after ending his career with the New York Red Bulls, and he has been linked to a potential coaching role at Arsenal under his former coach Arsene Wenger. Henry is France's record scorer with 51 goals but has not played since his making his 123rd international appearance against South Africa, during France's disappointing 2010 World Cup campaign. Sections of the French media have urged for Henry to be given a farewell send-off. France's next match is against Denmark at Stade de France on March 29, with a match reportedly scheduled against Brazil three days earlier.

## Lessons of Hughes' life unforgettable in death

### Sports Desk

"I promise I will never take anything for granted from this day forward, and take any opportunity that comes my way... I have realised that life isn't forever," reports Yahoo.

It was Phillip Hughes' sister Megan who spoke these words, but there was nary a soul in Macksville on Wednesday afternoon who did not feel the same way. From Trinidad to Sydney, from cricket to politics, from close family to far-flung friends, they had assembled for Hughes. Every last one wished they had come to see him bat.

The sense of loss was palpable, but so too was one of gratitude. Hughes had shown many of them great lessons in life. In his death playing the game, the example of his life will endure, and in the service that farewelled him, there were plenty to call upon.

Neither Macksville nor cricket has seen an event quite like it. Helicopters hovered overhead, a Test match-sized media contingent floated outside the Macksville High assembly hall, and buses conveyed a broad list of dignitaries and figureheads in addition to those who knew Hughes well.

For a time it felt as if the rolling cavalcade of notables, including Brian Lara, Virat Kohli, Shane Warne and Australia's prime minister Tony Abbott, would become too outsized for a gathering designed to celebrate Hughes' rich life, not ogle over the freakish circumstances of his death. Apart from the 1000 mourners in the hall, many scores more sat on the school's two ovals to watch on big screens.

But the deeply moving words of his family and his friends ensured that Hughes was farewelled in an entirely fitting manner, belying the thoughts, words and actions of all cricketers.

Ramunno's recollections said much about Hughes' cheekiness, his preference for "street smart" over "book smart", and his happenstance introduction to cricket via Jason, who challenged him to play as a fill-in one day or risk the quintessential sibling jibe of "wuss".

## Crosswords

### Quiz No-575



### Answers of the Quiz No-576

SEDAN	UMBRO	IRES
CARGO	NEED	NEAT
AVIAN	DALE	TETE
REPRESENTS	EVER	
TURD	SERENE	
CARD	AWE	ALL
ALAE	VERT	LODGE
PANACEA	RESPOND	
ERICA	READ	ETUI
TNT	XVI	REST
EASIER	PECK	
LXIV	OVERT	THROWN
ALGA	WANS	AERIE
TENT	ELSE	KNELL
ESSE	LEES	IDOLS

### DOWN

1. Madly in love 2. Makes a mistake 3. Harvest 4. Against 5. Whiskers 6. Nonclerical 7. Narcotic 8. Pews 9. Border 10. An open letter 11. African virus 12. A group of soldiers 13. Bottoms of shoes 18. Effeminate 24. Greatest possible 25. Water park slide 26. Formally surrender 27. Yeses 28. Defrost 29. An amusing remark 31. Part of a comparison 33. Loft 34. Appear 36. Tropical tuber 37. Misled 38. Terminates 42. Alike 43. Gender 45. Sexual desire 47. Waste conduit 48. Swelling under the skin 49. Museum piece 51. An uncle 52. Ate 54. South African monetary unit 56. Sun 57. An enclosure 58. Website addresses 59. Visual organs 62. Chart

### ACROSS

1. Hebrew unit of weight 6. Part of the outer ear 10. Catches 14. Sporting venue 15. Copied 16. River of Spain 17. Satisfying 19. It comes from sheep 20. Year 21. Card with one symbol 22. Blackthorn 23. An electronic musical instrument 25. Applause 26. Temporary living quarters 30. Grow teeth 32. Found on an eyelid 35. Badminton birdie 39. Erase 40. Achieve 41. Demesmes 43. Smiled contemptuously 44. Comparison 46. Fishing poles 47. A pinnacle of ice 50. Blended 53. Biblical garden 54. Thorax protector 55. Goof 60. Whip mark 61. Nutritious 63. Arab chieftain 64. Nil 65. American symbol 66. Risqué 67. Let go 68. Put on clothes

## BB to request Election Commission to add banking apps to smart NID cards

### Business Desk

Dhaka: The Bangladesh Bank is set to request the Election Commission to attach financial transaction-related applications (apps) on its smart national ID cards so that clients of scheduled banks and non-bank financial institutions are able to carry out transactions through these cards, reports in press release. A Bangladesh Bank official told on Thursday that the central bank will inform to the Election Commission soon, requesting for information on the types of applications that will be included in smart NID cards.

The Election Commission will have to give the banks and NBFI's access to its database if this comes into effect, he expresses.

The Election Commission began implementation of a \$195 million project, with assistance from the World Bank, to replace existing NID cards with smart cards in five years, to prevent forgery. The project is set to be completed by June 2016.

Pocket-size smart cards or chip cards or integrated circuit cards have embedded integrated circuits. Another Bangladesh Bank official said some countries, including Nigeria and



attached to the chip-based cards.

Thailand, have attached financial transaction-related applications to their chip-based NID cards.

Trust Bank Ltd applied to the central bank for the first time in June, 2014, requesting to carry out financial transactions for clients using smart NID cards, he said.

Trust Bank later made a presentation before central bank officials pointing out that farmers and freedom fighters would be able to receive subsidy and allowance from the government through the smart NID cards, he said.

If implemented, all banks and NBFI's will enjoy the financial transaction-related facility from the smart NID cards, he said.

The Bangladesh Bank official further said that financial transaction through smart NID cards would probably be more secure than the existing system as all types of information of the client would be

## Oil down after Saudi Arabia slashes crude price

SINGAPORE: Oil fell in Asian trade Today after major producer Saudi Arabia slashed the price of the crude it sells to Asia and the United States, reports

US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) for January delivery tumbled 44 cents to \$66.37 a barrel in afternoon trade and Brent crude for January dropped 49 cents to \$69.15. "Saudi Arabia has just cut the price of the oil it sells to Asia and the US and this is going to have a big effect on the market today and early next week," said Daniel Ang, an investment analyst at Phillip Futures in Singapore.

Saudi Aramco, the kingdom's state-owned oil company, said Thursday it had slashed its official selling price for Arab light grade oil bound for Asia in

January by \$1.90 a barrel from December's level.

It also reduced the price of Arab light grade oil bound for the United States by 70 cents. They're definitely fighting for market share," Ang told AFP.

Saudi Arabia is the biggest and most influential member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which late last month decided to maintain output levels despite a global oversupply.

OPEC's decision at its November 27 meeting in Vienna sent oil prices tumbling to their lowest point in five years.

Singapore's United Overseas Bank said Saudi Arabia's move was "reinforcing concerns that the world's leading exporter is now more focused

on defending its market share than increasing price".

Saudi reportedly believes oil prices could stabilise at \$60 a barrel and there is also rife speculation that Saudi is also trying to drive high-price producers out of the market," it said in a market commentary.

But French bank Credit Agricole said lower prices should give emerging markets a boost.

Oil-intensive economies, including the bulk of Asia, would benefit from lower inflation, larger monetary leeway to support the recovery, and lower corporate and household costs," it said.

Against such a backdrop this could support a scenario of a slight recovery in emerging market GDP growth in 2015."



Oil fell in Asian trade on Friday after major producer Saudi Arabia slashed the price of the crude it sells to Asia and the United States.

### Bundesbank cuts growth forecasts

FRANKFURT: The German central bank Today downgraded its growth forecasts for the German economy, Europe's biggest, for 2014, 2015 and 2016, reports AFP/BSS.

The Bundesbank said in a statement it is pencilling in growth of 1.4 percent for 2014, 1.0 percent for 2015 and 1.6 percent for 2016.

Previously, it had been projecting growth of 1.9 percent, 2.0 percent and 1.8 percent for the three years, respectively. The German economy lost considerable momentum in the second and third quarters of 2014 and moved onto a flatter growth path," the Bundesbank wrote.

"Following a brisk start to the year, which was partly fuelled by favourable weather conditions, real GDP (gross domestic product) did not grow any further in the second and third quarters ... and thus failed to live up to the hopes" of the central bank's previous projections published in June.

## Light at end of tunnel for German economy

FRANKFURT: An unexpectedly strong rise in factory orders added to the signs that the German economy, Europe's biggest, may be putting its recent phase of weakness behind it, reports AFP/BSS.

According to regular data compiled by the economy ministry, German industrial orders rose by 2.5 percent in October compared with the previous month, after already rising by 1.1 percent in September.

"This was a good start to the fourth quarter. Alongside a brightening of sentiment indicators, the signals are looking increasingly positive," the ministry said in a statement.

"Even if the economic risks continue to exist, this suggests that the German economy could be gradually beginning to recover from its period of weakness."

Other recent German data, including key sentiment indicators such as the Ifo business climate index, have also surprised to the upside.

And while the German central bank or Bundesbank slashed its growth forecasts for 2014, 2015 and 2016 on Friday, it too said the economy remains in "remarkably good shape."

Whether the German economy can grow more dynamically over the course of 2015 primarily depends on the international setting," the Bundesbank said in its half-yearly projections.

If the economic recovery in the euro area picks up as expected and world trade gains renewed momentum, additional expansion will be possible."

German enterprises were predominantly well positioned, with low debt and balanced price-cost ratios, and "should be able to take advantage of the opportunities that may arise," the central bank wrote.

Given the extremely favourable funding conditions, this is likely to extend to investment as well. The domestic economy, too, is in good shape."

Analysts also took heart from the apparent turnaround in factory orders and other data.

Overall, it suggests that the German economy has stabilised following the weakness seen in the summer," said BayernLB economist Stefan Kipar.

The signs are favourable that negative growth GDP rates will be successfully avoided in the winter. The lower euro will provide support," Kipar said.

German gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 0.1 percent in the second quarter, but returned to growth again in the third quarter, meaning Europe's biggest economy escaped a new recession.

Commerzbank economist Marco Wagner said the latest factory orders data "suggest that the manufacturing sector has turned around and that production will tend to rise again in the coming months."

### India's new government kicks off privatisation drive

NEW DELHI: India's new right-wing government kicked off its troubled privatisation drive Today, selling a five-percent stake in the state-controlled Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) to generate revenue and plug a gaping budget deficit, reports UNB.

The offer of shares in the country's biggest domestic steel producer is the first in a string of asset disposals planned by the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Analysts originally expected the sale to take place in July but the divestment programme has been slow to get off the ground.

The SAIL offer that was set at a minimum price of 83-rupees-a-share, represented a two-and-a-half percent discount to Thursday's closing price.

### Hollande kicks off Kazakhstan trip

ASTANA, Kazakhstan: French President Francois Hollande arrived in Kazakhstan yesterday at the start of a two-day trip aimed at boosting trade and political ties with the emerging Central Asian country, reports AP.

The French leader was due to hold talks later in the day with Kazakh counterpart Nursultan Nazarbayev, who has run the country since independence in 1991.

After meetings in the capital Astana, he was due to travel to the largest city Almaty in the afternoon. Subjects on the agenda would include Ukraine, with Russia keen to assert its influence over former Soviet republics and France playing a leading role in trying to rein in Moscow.

Trade would also be discussed, with Kazakhstan being the world's largest producer of uranium and sitting on major reserves of oil, iron ore and coal.

## Robi introduces electricity bill pay service in Mymensingh

MYMENSINGH: Mobile operator Robi has introduced an 'electricity bill pay service programme' for the customers of Power Development Board (PDB) of Mymensingh region, reports in press release.

The programme was inaugurated by General Manager (commercial) of PDB Engineer Abdur Rouf on Thursday at a function held at local Al Baraka community centre organised by Robi.

The inaugural function was addressed, among others, by Chief Engineer PDB Mymensingh region SK Md. Alauddin, Chief Operating Officer Mahtabuddin Ahmed, Secretary Mymensingh Press Club Ataul Karim Khokan, Additional Chief Engineer Rakibul Islam, Superintendent Engineer Mrinal Kanti Sen, Digital Services head of

business of Robi Shah Jalal Uddin and Regional Manager Mymensingh Ashraf Uddin Ahamed.

In his inaugural speech, Abdur Rouf said the programme introduced in order to ensure facilities for the customers of PDB to pay their electricity bills through Robi's cash points. The mobile users would get correct information of monthly outstanding money, he said adding this system is very easy and safe for the customers of PDB.

With the introduction of new system, the PDB authorities hoped that the sufferings of the customers would reduce to a great extent as well as percentage of revenue income would be increased.

A colourful procession was also brought out in the district town on the occasion.



## Another 'House Uncle' with 132 homes found in China

SHANGHAI: A former Chinese village head accumulated 132 Shanghai residential properties, reports said, the latest "House Uncle"-a nickname coined by netizens for male officials with multiple properties-to be identified in a corruption crackdown, reports AP.

The 60-year-old man, whose surname was given as Li, was previously Communist Party secretary of an unnamed village near Wenzhou who now worked in the steel and construction material industries, the official Xinhua news agency said Friday.

His holdings came to light when another individual sued him for failing to repay borrowings, said government-backed news portal Zhejiang Online, which first reported the case.

The properties, described as small flats in Shanghai's western suburb of Songjiang, were mortgaged for more than 70 million yuan (\$11.5 million) when they were found and seized by the court, reports said.

Shanghai has one of China's most active property markets with new home prices rising 1.18 percent on-month in November to 32,140 yuan per square metre, making it the

country's second most expensive city behind Beijing, according to the independent China Index Academy. The Cangnan county court in Zhejiang province, which heard the case, could not be reached for comment. Reports did not say whether Li would face charges over the properties.

Investors from Wenzhou-known as a centre of private enterprise-have been blamed for driving up property prices across China in the past, with accounts of buyers from the city acquiring all the units in entire buildings.

In August, China published a draft of long-awaited property registration rules, a move expected to crack down on corruption by preventing officials from hiding their assets.

China's Communist chief Xi Jinping launched a much-publicised drive against graft after he came to power in late 2012.

In one high-profile case last year, Gong Aiai, vice president of a bank in the northern province of Shaanxi and a delegate to the local legislature, was sentenced to three years in prison after she was found to have purchased more than 40 properties under multiple identities.

## US adds 321,000 jobs in November

US: The US economy added 321,000 jobs in November, while the unemployment rate stayed at 5.8%, official Labor Department figures show.

The number of jobs created is above forecasts of around 225,000 new posts.

The figures are a significant gauge of the health of the economy.

US employers have added at least 200,000 jobs for ten months in a row, the longest growth period since 1995. The revised figures for the second quarter showed that exports increased by 11.1% from the previous three months, while business spending rose by 9.7%. Growth in consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of US

economic activity, was 2.5%, unchanged from the previous estimate.

Analysts said the new figures suggested the US economy was in rude health.

"The data signals an even stronger rebound from the decline seen in the first quarter, when extreme weather battered many parts of the economy," said Chris Williamson at Markit Economics.

"However, the impressive gain in the second quarter looks to be far more than just a weather-related upturn, with evidence pointing to an underlying buoyant pace of economic expansion. Survey data in particular indicate that strong growth has persisted throughout the third quarter."



The figures are a significant gauge of the health of the economy.



Department of Soil, Water & Environment of Dhaka University with the cooperation of Soil science association on Friday organized a day-long seminar at the senate building of the University marking the World Soil Day. Dr. A K Azad Chowdhury, Chairman (State Minister), University Grants Commission attended the program as the chief guest where DU VC Prof. Arefin Siddique, Daffodil university emeritus Prof. Aminul Islam, DU Pro-VC Prof. Shahid Akhtar Hossain were present.

## BNP-Jamaat conspiring against state, govt: Hanif

KUSHTIA : Awami League joint general secretary Mahbub-ul-Alam Hanif said here yesterday that the government would take necessary action against those bureaucrats who had midnight parleys with BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia violating the service rule, reports BSS.

"BNP has now chosen the path of conspiracy after failing in their mission in approaching their foreign

masters. It's nothing new for them (BNP) as they had conspired in the past. They tried repeatedly to kill our leader Sheikh Hasina and they are now engaged in the similar design," he said replying to questions of local reporters on Thursday night's Gulshan conspiracy at his residence in the district headquarters.

Hanif said, "The Thursday night's incident proved again that BNP-Jamaat has been conspiring against

the state and the government. The present government can't be defeated by hatching conspiracy as over 75 percent people of the country have faith, confidence and support upon the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina."

Kushtia District Awami League president Sadar Uddin Khan, general secretary Asgar Ali and senior vice-president Rabiul Islam were present, among others.

## BNP to hold press conference today

DHAKA : BNP will hold an emergency press conference at its chairperson's Gulshan office on Saturday morning, reports UNB.

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir will address the press meet to be held at 11am, BNP chairperson's media wing member Sayrul Kabir Khan told UNB on Friday.

Party sources said the press conference will be held to express the party's reaction to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Friday's press meet.

At the press conference, the Prime Minister briefed journalists about the outcome of her recent Nepal visit to attend the 18th Saarc Summit and the subsequent Malaysia tour.

Fakhrul at the BNP's press conference will give replies to the PM's remarks about BNP and its leadership and other issues, said a senior party leader wishing anonymity.

## Party men demand N'ganj BNP president Taimur's resignation

NARAYANGANJ : Local BNP leaders and activists on Friday demanded the resignation of their district unit president Advocate Taimur Alam Khandker for his weak leadership, reports UNB.

At a meeting of BNP's Fatulla thana unit at Panchabati BNP office, they censured Taimur for 'failed leadership' on various issues and demanded his resignation.

The meeting was held as part of preparations for the upcoming rally of BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia in Narayanganj. Narayanganj city BNP general secretary ATM Kamal, district Sweekhahsebak Dal joint convener Riad Mohammad Chowdhury, Fatulla Thana Jubo Dal president Shahidul Islam Titu and general secretary Masudur Rahman spoke at the meeting presided over by Fatulla Thana BNP senior vice-president and Katubpur union parishad chairman Monirul Alam Senu.

Khaleda Zia is scheduled to address a public rally arranged by the BNP-led 20-party alliance at Kanchpur in Sonargaon upazila of the district on December 13.

## Muggers loot Tk 2.36 lakh stabbing 2 in city

DHAKA : In separate incidents, muggers stabbed two people and took away cash money, including foreign currency, worth about Tk 2.36 lakh in the city's Gurun and Palashi areas on Friday, reports UNB.

The first incident took place at Palashi crossing where a group of three snatchers riding a motorcycle intercepted Md Rasel, 30, a fish trader, around 6am. The gangsters

stabbed him indiscriminately and snatched Tk 20,000 from him, said victim's sister Sheuly. He was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. In the other incident, Muhib Khan, a Malaysia expatriate, fell victim to mugging when he came out of Hajji Mosque at South Gurun after Juma prayers. A gang of hoodlums, numbering 4-5, waylaid him at Hajji Mosque Gali on his way to Laba Aid.

The extent of losses caused by the fire was estimated at Tk 25 lakh.

## Cotton factory gutted in Rajbari

RAJBARI : A cotton factory was gutted by a fire in the English Market area of the district town on Friday noon, reports UNB.

The fire broke out at 'Ashra Enterprise' around 12pm and it soon engulfed the whole factory, said factory owner Asadul Khan.

Informed, two firefighting units rushed to the spot and doused the blaze after three hours of frantic efforts, said Fazlul Haque, station officer of Rajbari Fire Brigade.

The extent of losses caused by the fire was estimated at Tk 25 lakh.

## 'Pirate ringleader' killed in Pirojpur 'gunfight'

PIROJPUR : The alleged ringleader of a pirate gang was killed in a 'gunfight' with members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Kaulkhali upazila on Friday evening, reports UNB.

The deceased was identified as Nazir Ahmed Sabuj, 40, the chief of 'Sabuj Bahini'.

Deputy commanding officer Major Adnan of Rab-8 said they had secret information that a group of bandits was taking preparations in the College field area of the upazila headquarters to commit robbery.

Based on the information, a patrol team of the Rab unit launched a drive in the area around 6:45pm to arrest the gangsters.

Sensing the presence of the elite force team, the goons opened fire on them, promoting the Rab members to fire back that triggered a gun battle.

## BD can generate

Page From-01

said this technology is a new invention in the modern science and some theories of physics are being applied in the process.

They will soon go for formal demonstration of the technology to draw attention so that both the public and private sectors take the matter seriously with an investment perspective.

The system uses round objects moving on a plain exterior to capture the surface's gravitational energy to run traditional generators to produce power.

The technology is about converting gravitational energy into mechanical energy to generate electrical energy. It will not use any fossil fuel and thus, will not release any toxic elements into the atmosphere.

Gravitational energy is potential energy an object possesses because of its position in a gravitational field.

## US tried to stop

Page From-01

"It was not the end, there were allegations of corruption against the government and the government took that as a challenge. The World Bank did not find any corruption regarding the Padma Bridge after their hectic attempts to prove that," she added.

Talking about Bangladesh's relations with other countries, the Prime Minister said sometimes problems might occur with a particular country. "But that doesn't mean the diplomatic ties with that country will worsen, or there will be no diplomatic ties, or the diplomatic ties will come to an end. I don't think so. The diplomatic relations will continue as per diplomatic norms."

She also mentioned that if any problem rises that might hamper the diplomatic ties, it would be dealt with accordingly.

Hasina said: "But some people say that without good relations with America, Bangladesh will be destroyed. Let me tell them, things are not like that."

In this connection, she said that the foreign policy of Bangladesh follows the policy that was adopted by the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and that is 'friendship to all, malice to none'.

"We do not want to consider our policy as just look east, west, north or south. We'll deepen our relations with that country which will be beneficial for the economic development of Bangladesh."

She also said that if Bangladesh continues to do well there will be no scarcity of friends.

## India sends drinking water to Maldives

NEW DELHI : The government of India has started sending drinking water to the Maldives in the wake of a severe water crisis in the capital Male due to a fire in the city's water treatment plant, reports BSS.

Official sources said the decision came today in response to an appeal from the Maldives government. The Male administration made the appeal to India, Sri Lanka, China and the United States as water supply to more than 100,000

residents in Male was cut off because of the fire at the plant.

The water from India is being supplied by large planes and ships and the first consignment has already reached the country, said a minister here on Friday.

Foreign ministry spokesman Syed Akbaruddin tweeted: "India will provide all assistance to the Maldives in facing water shortage due to fire in desalination plant." He added that the "first sortie" of Indian assistance arrived in Male.

## NASA's deep space capsule poised for 2nd launch bid

CAPE CANAVERAL : NASA counted down Friday to its second try at test-launching the deep space Orion capsule on its first journey into orbit, after wind gusts and rocket problems delayed Thursday's attempt, reports BSS.

The unmanned four-hour flight aims to test crucial systems like the heat shield and parachute splashdown on a spacecraft that could one day transport humans to an asteroid, the Moon or Mars.

The window for liftoff aboard a United Launch Alliance Delta IV Heavy rocket from Cape Canaveral, Florida opens at 7:05 am (1205 GMT) and lasts for two hours, 39 minutes. Early Friday, clouds and rain lingered over the area but conditions could clear up by launch time, according to weather officer Kathy Winters.

"Current weather conditions at Cape Canaveral are observed red because of cumulus clouds and precipitation over the launch site," said the update on NASA's Orion blog at 4:49 am (0949 GMT).

"The good news is that both of those violations are expected to clear in about an hour."

The launch is the first in more than 40 years of a US spacecraft intended to carry humans beyond the Moon. It has reinvigorated a US human exploration program that has been stagnant for more than three years since the last American space shuttle carried a crew of astronauts to the International Space Station.

The 30-year shuttle program ended in 2011, leaving the United States no other option but to pay Russia to carry astronauts on its Soyuz capsules to the orbiting research lab at a cost of \$71 million per seat.

"Two loops -

Friday's launch attempt will propel the Orion capsule into two loops around the Earth.

The first orbit is to be about as high as the International Space Station, which circles at an altitude of about 270 miles (430 kilometers), but the second would soar 15 times higher, to an apogee of 3,600 miles above the Earth. Then, the spacecraft is supposed to plunge into the waters off San Diego, California to be retrieved by the US Navy.

An analysis of sophisticated sensors on the capsule should let NASA know if the

temperature inside remained survivable for a potential crew, even as the spacecraft itself heated to 4,000 degrees Fahrenheit (2,200 Celsius) during its re-entry to Earth's atmosphere at a velocity of 20,000 miles per hour.

Potential future missions for Orion, which can fit four people at a time, include a trip to lasso an asteroid and a journey to Mars by the 2030s.

NASA has already spent \$9.1 billion on Orion and the powerful rocket meant to propel it with crew on board, the Space Launch System (SLS).

Another unmanned test flight is slated for 2018. The first Orion test flight with people on board is scheduled for 2021, when total costs are projected to reach \$19-22 billion.

United Launch Alliance chief operating officer Dan Collins said he was confident that the sluggish fuel valves that delayed Thursday's launch attempt could be resolved in time for Friday morning's bid.

"We're going to make sure we have a happy rocket, and we're going to send Orion off on a successful mission," Collins told reporters.

About \$370 million dollars in equipment is at stake in Friday's launch.

## Mutual endeavor to boost up

From Page-12

addressed a press conference at her official residence Ganobhaban in the afternoon about the results of her recent bilateral tour in Malaysia.

During the bilateral meeting, the two south Asian countries discussed the possible ways to strengthen ties in the areas of trade, tourism, culture, human resource development and higher education.

Four deals including Employment of Workers; Mutual cooperation in the Field of Tourism; development in Cultural, Arts and Heritage sectors; an agreement between Bangladesh and Malaysia on the Partial Abolition of Visa Requirements were signed.

The Prime Minister said, "Primarily some 12000 Bangladeshi workers will work in Malaysia after proper training and selection process against the demand of some 60,000 workers at Sarawak state of the country".

About the Bangladeshi migrant workers in Malaysia, Razak said there are some 2,99,000 legal Bangladeshi workers in Malaysia mainly in the services, plantation, and construction sectors and the number

could be raised.

Malaysia is one of the most beautiful countries in the world perspective which has largest pluralistic society without remarkable violence and disintegration problem.

Sheikh Hasina has summoned Malaysian investors and entrepreneurs to be a part of the country's next phase of economic growth.

Expressing gratitude Sheikh Hasina said, "They (Malaysian intellectuals) have made great contribution to the flourished look modern Malaysia over the decades. I am expecting the same policies set by them in the economic growth of Bangladesh."

She hoped that the Malaysian traders would reconsider Bangladesh as an authentic competitive invest-place with effective benefits in the Asia-Pacific.

Sheikh Hasina said she and her Malaysian counterpart, Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak had recognized the spheres for further growth and investment.

Last year, total bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Malaysia increased to US\$1.67 billion from US\$1.58 billion in 2012.

## India recognizes BD Soviets veto

From Page-1

The matter was subsequently referred to the UN General Assembly which would be non-binding on its members.

In a letter to the US administration the Soviet government said that both the countries should respect the will of the people of East Bengal as expressed in the December 1970 election. In Washington D.C. the highest policy making body of the US government sat to review the situation.

The president's assistant for national security, Henry Kissinger said "We should not get involved in a lost cause (the case of Pakistan)." On the other hand, the US president, Richard Nixon, expressed dismay that the US had discontinued military aid to Pakistan during the '60s because of the lat-

ter's hob-nobbing with China. He called for restoration of military ties.

They also said that the case of Pakistan attacking India was like "Finland attacking the Soviet Union."

They also came to the conclusion that the war in the East would not "last more than 10 days."

Meanwhile on the ground, Akhaura was secured, paving the way for the attack on Dhaka. A number of other towns like Jessore, Sylhet and Pirganj in Lalmonirhat were about to fall, any time.

In the western front Pakistan had some success in the Kashmir front but in the Punjab Indian forces had the upper hand.

In Amritsar 150 soldiers of the East Bengal Regiment of the Pakistan Army defected.



A farmer watering to his land defying the dense fog. The picture was taken from Shaghata upazila of Gaibandha district on Friday. Photo: Banglar Chokh

◆ UNITING PEOPLE EVERYDAY ◆

SATURDAY, DHAKA, DECEMBER 6, 2014, AGRAHAYAN 22, 1421 BS, SAFAR 12, 1436 HIJRI



UNFCCC (United Nation Framework for Climate Change Convention) COP (Conference of Parties)-20 began in the capital city of Peru on Monday.

Photo : Banglar Chokh

## 'Consider inter-generational equity for legally binding climate deal'

DHAKA : Civil society leaders from Asia, Africa and Latin America have urged government delegates attending the UNFCCC COP-20 in Lima to consider the urgency of a legally binding climate deal while super typhoon Ruby is about to thrash on the Philippines, reports UNB.

UNFCCC (United Nation Framework for Climate Change Convention) COP (Conference of Parties)-20 began in the capital city of Peru on December 1 and it will continue till December 12.

The civil society leaders also urged the global leaders to consider intergenerational equity ensuring zero percent discount on fossil fuel by respecting human rights, particularly of indigenous people.

They raised the demands at a press conference held in Lima at the media centre of UNFCCC CoP-20 on Friday, according to a message received here on

Friday afternoon. Civil societies from MVCs (Most Vulnerable Countries) and LDCs (Least Developed Countries) organised the press conference titled 'Expectation from COP-20 in view of MVC and LDC interest: A civil society perspective'.

Moderated by Tetet Lauron of Ibon International from the Philippines, the press conference was addressed, among others, by Mrimal Kanti Tripura of BIPNetCCBD of Bangladesh, Tania Guillén from Centro Humboldt of Nicaragua, Asha Sitati from Kenya, and youth activist from Bangladesh Risalat Khan of Avaz, a global campaign organisation. The press conference was organised by a coordination body of Bangladeshi climate activists and climate alliance namely BAPA, BIPNetCCBD, CDP, CCDF, CPRD, CSRL, BCJF, FEJB

and EquityBD in COP-20, led by Jahangir Hossain Masum of CDP and Md Shamsuddoha of CPRD at Lima.

Risalat Khan read out a written statement on behalf of the group that expressed worried about loose coordination and leadership among the delegation, especially among MVCs and LDCs.

Marinal Kanti Tripura of BIPNetCCBD and Maleya Foundation of Bangladesh, representing IPCCSD and IIPFCCC, demanded the recognition of the role of indigenous people in adaptation and mitigation.

Tetet Lauron reminded the global delegation about the Super Typhoon Haywanhit Philippines during Warsaw Climate Conference (COP-19) and now another typhoon Ruby to landfall during Lima COP-20 is signaling an urgency of legally binding climate deal.

### 10 Hizbut Tahrir men held

CHITTAGONG : Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) detained 10 activists of banned Islamist militant outfit Hizbut Tahrir when they brought out anti-government procession at city's Andar Killah area yesterday noon, reports UNB.

Kotwali thana police recovered some anti-government leaflets and banners from the possession of arrestee. Officer-in-Charge of Kotwali thana A K M Mohiuddin Selim told BSS that police detained 10 persons suspecting them as members of Hizbut Tahrir.

Eyewitnesses said a group of 35-40 people under a banner of Hizb-ut Tahrir brought out anti-government procession from Love Lane area.

## Hard-earned democracy not safe yet : Khaleda

DHAKA : Accusing the government of shackling nation with a one-party cruel rule, BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia on Friday said democracy established in the country through the sacrifices of the blood of hundreds of martyrs is not safe yet, reports UNB.

In a message, she said, "Our democracy has got stumbled again and again on its march forward...the democracy established at the blood of hundreds of martyrs is not yet out of danger." Khaleda, also a former Prime Minister, issued the message on the occasion of Fall of Autocracy Day, commemorating military ruler HM Ershad's bowing out in the face of a mass upheaval on December 6, 1990.

She alleged that the true colour of the cruel and despotic one-party rule is exposing gradually with the changing attitude of current regime. "People's rights and independence

have been put at stake once again by chaining the nation with the one-party cruel rule through holding the January-5 unilateral election." Khaleda claimed that the party having the spirit of one-party Baksal rule together with the autocrat who had annihilated democracy in the 80s have destroyed all the democratic institutions. "This undemocratic evil force is gradually stanching people's basic and constitutional rights." The BNP chief urged all to get united to resist the evil forces and give democracy a permanent shape.

On December 6, 1990, the autocratic Ershad regime was forced to step down handing over power to a caretaker administration after nine years of rule. Since then, different socio-political organisations have been observing the day as the Fall of Autocracy Day or Democracy Day.

## Mutual endeavor to boost up economic growth

HABIBUR RAHMAN OVI

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak have reached in one platform to boost up the bilateral trade and commerce, especially to reduce the trade gap between Kuala Lumpur and Dhaka through starting negotiations on Free Trade Agreement.

Responding to Bangladesh's request to widen the duty-free and quota-free access of Bangladeshi products to Malaysian market, especially

pharmaceuticals goods, cement, jute and jute made goods, ceramics, footwear, both with the Prime Ministers agreed to this end.

Malaysia assured Bangladesh of amplifying the helping hand with a view to becoming ASEAN's dialogue partner and hosting the next Joint Commission meeting between the two countries in 2015.

Expecting the formation of 'Bangladesh-Malaysia Investment Forum' in the Joint Commission meeting to be held in Malaysia next year, PM Sheikh Hasina on Friday ➤ (Contd. on page-11)

TIB's report on corruption prepared on faulty information : Hasan Mahmud

DHAKA : Publicity and Publication affairs secretary of the ruling Awami League Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has published its report on corruption assumption index based on faulty information to deliberately tarnish country's image to the foreigners, reports UNB.

The Awami League (AL) leader said this while speaking as the chief guest at a discussion in the city. Narayanganj District unit of Mukti Joddha Projatma League organised the discussion at Dhaka Reporters Unity at Segunbagicha protesting instigating statements of BNP chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia and BNP-Jamaat leaders against the state and the war of liberation.

President of the organisation Mahinur Sunny chaired the discussion, also addressed, among others, by Dhaka City AL publicity secretary Abdul Huq Sabuj and Mukti Joddha Projatma League president Asaduzzaman Durjoy. On Wednesday (December 3), TIB released a report on universal corruption assumption index at the National Press Club in which Bangladesh was placed on 14th position as among the most corrupt states in the world.

Hasan Mahmud said, "There are some misled persons and organisations in the country. The aforesaid persons become active in different television channels after midnight while the said organisations are always engaged in tarnishing country's image to the foreigners. Thanks to these organisations if they like TIB want to point our mistakes. But, it can't be accepted if their intention is anti-state activities."

## 'Gulshan conspirators' to face music : Quamrul

DHAKA : Terming BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia's meeting with some government officials on Thursday night as a 'midnight blueprint', Food Minister Quamrul Islam on Friday said necessary actions will be taken against those involved in the 'conspiracy', reports UNB.

"It's a conspiracy against the state...intelligence agencies will find out those involved in the conspiracy and actions will be taken accordingly," he said. Quamrul, also a joint general secretary of Awami League's Dhaka city unit, made the remarks at a discussion marking the 51st death anniversary of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy at Shilpakala Academy.

"We saw last night a meeting was held in BNP Chairperson's Gulshan office. This meeting reminds us the meeting held in November 2006 at Uttara. Our intelligence agencies are not that much inefficient that they won't be able to find out who go where, when and why

They'll find out who are involved in the conspiracy," he added.

About BNP's denial about such meeting, the Awami League leader said Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir claimed that no such meeting was held while BNP chairperson's press secretary Maruf Kamal Khan said such might have taken place. Their statements are contradictory, he said.

"Gulshan conspiracy" won't be successful neither BNP will succeed by hatching conspiracies and begging support from foreigners," said Quamrul.

He suggested BNP to go to the people of the country instead of hatching conspiracies or resorting to any evil design.

The minister urged all to resist BNP's plot against the state and democracy.

Some 20 retired and serving bureaucrats reportedly held a meeting with BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office on Thursday night.



Police on Friday barricaded the rally of Islami Andalan, an Islamic organization of the country, in Paltan.

Photo : Banglar Chokh

## Tofail for quality management in corporate sector

DHAKA : Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed on Friday stressed developing the corporate sector through quality management with the help of professionally educated, thoroughly trained and well-practiced company secretaries, reports UNB.

He urged all involved with the Institute of Chartered Secretaries of Bangladesh (ICSB) to work in a stronger way for the improvement of corporate management and good governance in Bangladesh.

The Commerce Minister was speaking at the inaugural session of the 5th National Convention of the ICSB, on the theme 'Corporate Leadership: Enhancing Governance Excellence' at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the city.

ICSB President Mohammad Asad Ullah and Senior Vice President M

Naseemul Hye, among others, spoke at the inaugural session. Speaking as the chief guest, Tofail said the goal of development is to improve human's wellbeing in a sustainable manner which also includes the expansion of capabilities. "In addressing its development initiatives, the government indeed realises that it should grow together in a public-private partnership process."

Accordingly, to promote the corporate sector, which is more in the private, the government has initiated a number of newer enactments to improve the management and governance of the corporate sector of Bangladesh, the Commerce Minister told the function. Referring to the enactment of the Chartered Secretaries Act, he said it should now strengthen the corporate management and governance scenario.

DHAKA : A move is underway to prepare a fresh power system master plan (PSMP) for the next 10-20 years with the focus on using imported coal instead of local one for power generation, reports UNB.

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) supports the move with its financial and technical assistance as part of its greater theme to create a Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt (BIG-B).

The current PSMP was also prepared with JICA's help in 2005 with the 2010 timeline focusing on the use of local natural gas and local coal as primary sources of fuel for power generation.

But the focus of the new PSMP 2015 is going to be on imported coal because of a

changed scenario in the local natural resources in gas and coal reserve. "The depleting gas reserve has prompted the policymakers to choose the imported coal as primary source of fuel for energy," said a top official at the Power Division.

He referred to a Power Division document which says, "...the existing gas-based power plants cannot be operated due to the shortage of adequate gas pressure, and gas reserve is alarmingly depleting".

To cope with the changed scenario and the government's vision 2021, which envisons to provide electricity to all by 2021, the document also mentions that the PSMP has been undertaken considering coal as dominant primary fuel for the

## Fifth Butterfly Fair held JU with a great Joy

HUMAUN KABIR JU CORRESPONDENT

"If there's Butterflies fly in the sky, the nature will gain new dynamism" holding this slogan Jahangirnagar University organized fifth butterfly fair to enhance butterfly conservation and environmental awareness, yesterday. The fair was held at University's Zahir Raihan auditorium.

JU VC Prof. Dr. Farzana Islam on Friday morning inaugurated the program as a chief guest. Later she established the base of Butterfly Park and Research Centre. The fair was attended by JU Pro-Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Abul Hossain, Regional Representative of IUCN Ishfaq Ahmed, "Nature and Life" foundation president Mukit Majumdar Babu and prominent filmmaker and producer Catherine Masud among others.

Convener of the program, Zoology Prof. Md Monowar Hossain Tuhin presided the fair. Department of Zoology organized the fair including photography competition on butterflies, demonstration, butterfly identification, butterfly recognizing competition, children's art competition, butterfly kite flying, and short film



## Outraged over 'Grand Theft Auto' Ban, Aussie Gamers Petition to Ban the Bible

### Interesting News

The petition, posted Dec. 4 on Change.org, has already attracted more than 20,000 signatures. In an obvious parody of arguments in favor of banning video games, the petition claims the Bible "encourages readers to murder woman for entertainment" by "committing sexual violence

against women, then abuse or kill them to proceed or get 'god' points." It calls on Australian retailers, including Target, to pull the holy book from their shelves.

The petition is the latest in a series of satirical attacks by gamers down under designed to protest the ban by retailers Target and Kmart, who have refused to stock Grand Theft Auto V.

